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Arthur Byron Cover Cathedrals in Inner Space

"We are all interested in the future, because that is where we shall spend the rest of our lives."

—The Great Criswell in
Plan 9 from Outer Space
written and directed by
Edward D. Wood, Jr.

Forget the winners; literary history is written by the critics. Critics crash on the beach long after the winners have left the shore, and they decide, based solely upon their unqualified good taste, inherent perception and wisdom, and finally their hard-headed opinions, just who actually committed an act of literature. They also sift through the evidence and decide what *really* happened, as opposed to what the people who were there *think* happened. There can be a big difference.

One hundred years from now, literary historians will think of the conflict between the New and Old Wave audiences as typical of the sort of highly spirited polarization brought about by the Arts' reaction to social and technological change; a less typical example might be the premiere of Igor Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" in 1913, when fistfights broke out between members of the audience. Recently a "restored" performance of the original ballet, whose original choreography and costume design had been lost, drew rave reviews from critics around the world. By its very nature, such a performance must deliberately set out to recreate the spirit of that very first opening night, to allow the audience to glimpse, however dimly, the activity that caused a bunch of bourgeois music lovers to duke it out in the aisles.

The contemporary reader must make a similar conceptual leap when confronted with the New Wave. Because so many of its innovations have by now been assimilated into the field's mainstream, and have become customary literary conventions themselves, today's reader is bound to wonder what could have been so then-new and extraordinary about it. And while he may not know Art in favor of knowing what he likes, he's likely to be perplexed by the following anecdote, courtesy of Charles Platt in *Dream Makers: The Uncommon People Who Write Science Fiction* (1980):

There were open confrontations between "new wave" radicals and the science-fiction establishment (this was, after all, the late 1960's). You could feel antagonism in the air, at, for instance, The Globe, a mediocre, obscure pub in Holborn, where diehard British science-fiction fans gathered socially on the first Thursday of each month. Most of them looked like refugees in raincoats, trading tattered copies of prewar pulp magazines and reminiscing about the golden age of "scientific"; fat dowdy college students with pimples amid the fur on their faces, debating monster movies and pop music. It was quite horrible. In this sleazy scene Moorcrock looked somewhat out of place—tall, rotund, long-haired, bearded, dressed dashing in a pale caramel suit, lavender shirt, paisley tie, and wide-brimmed felt hat. The rest of the staff wore equally colorful clothes (this was the 1960s) and were met with equal

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In this issue

Arthur Byron Cover goes on a fantastic journey into the New Wave's inner space
Gwyneth Jones reviews Ellen Datlow's

Alien Sex very, very carefully

Donald G. Keller vivisections *The Brains of Rats*

Did you hear the one about *My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist?*

Fernando Q. Gouveia and Leonard Rysdyk on the best short sf of 1989

And we journey to the worlds of Clifford Simak and the lands of Other Edens, Star of Gypsies, and Orphia

Gwyneth Jones

Whatever Turns You On *Alien Sex*, edited by Ellen Datlow

New York: Dutton, 1990; \$18.95 hc; 251 pages

Alien Sex, it transpires, in the introduction, was not the title Ellen Datlow wanted for this anthology. She wanted something subtler; this one just grew on people. But it suits the collection well: a hard, blunt, primal composite. *Alien*, which means nasty. *Sex*, which means poking a fraction of your delicate and precious self (doesn't have to be a penis: a finger, maybe?) into something icky. Into the alien *out there*. Which may or may not be alive but which is definitely hostile. It has to be, since it isn't part of precious you.

Datlow's organically grown title is a clear warning. Any fool who picks this book up expecting mild porn with tentacles deserves the sad disappointment they're going to get. Most of the stories are decidedly downbeat: more to the point, they are extremely, self-consciously *serious*. The term "consciously" is important here. *Sex, per se*, is one of those characters one should refuse to work with, or the children and animals rule. The subject will almost certainly upstage the writer. Fucking is so personal. We all have our funny little ways. The risk of being inadvertently hilarious is so great that the only sensible approach is to be awfully, awfully serious; or to pass the whole thing off as a joke. But even jokes aren't safe, because fucking is so political. The who-does-what-to-whom often can so speedily wipe the smile off your reader's face, turning a harmless bit of fun into a sickening satirical fable. William Gibson, in his foreword, suggests that this is a post-AIDS, post-feminist book. But there's more to it than that. Ghostly and death-dealing venereal disease isn't new (what about syphilis?). Nor is the battle of the sexes. What *Alien Sex* describes is the state of sexual play in a world that has become highly sensitized—by a whole complex of historical, scientific, sociological effects—to risk. Risk-taking of the literary kind, of the political kind, of the emotional kind. . . . The net result reminds me of the old playground joke: Q *How do porcupines make love?* A *Very, very carefully!* Modern humans feel the same, even when they're just

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writing about it. And maybe with good reason. The days of literary innocence are over. SF writers of all persuasions, all shades of gender politics, have had twenty years now to think about fictional sex, and what it can do to your reputation as a cool, *awwww* dude. Everybody knows the score.

Inevitably, then, some of the reprint stories in the collection look quite weirdly lightweight alongside the modern pieces: especially when they're trying to be funny. The Philip José Farmer story, "The Jungle Rot Kid on the Nod," is a tiring William Burroughs-style pastiche of Tarzan (both called Burroughs, goddit!). The Harlan Ellison story, "How's the Night Life on Cissaldis?", is a one-liner about voraciously sexy aliens long past its best-by date. Larry Niven's "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleenex" is the joke that survives: a deadpan classic about the problems of sex with a superbeing. Even so, the relentless list of a hundred-and-one ways to destroy a female human body might to seem a *tiny bit* misogynistic, to a really faded female reader. I don't suppose Mr. Niven intended this. But I don't suppose the notion would worry him much, either.

Ms. Datlow remarks in her introduction that the stories are roughly evenly balanced between male and female writers. In view of the precise subject, it might be more interesting to work out what proportion of the contributors have a sexual orientation aligned with the consensus majority. How many of these writers are what's laughingly called "normal" and how many are alienated outsiders? And in which set would you include K. W. Jeter? Or (this is a subtler point) Connie Willis? Jeter's story, "The First Time," is arguably the strongest in the collection. It tells of a young boy's first visit to a whorehouse. The initiation is revealed as a kind of murder by a great big dollop of magically-realistic grue. The effect is bad and brilliant. Most telling of all, at the end, fully realizing the horror of what a regular guy does for fun on a Saturday night, the boy feels only disgust, no pity for his victim. The only person little boy lost feels sorry for is himself.

Connie Willis's "All My Darling Daughters" is a well-known story, even notorious. I find some of the criticism levelled at it quite obtuse. There are things in this story to which I take strong exception, not least

the misuse of the name and history of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. But the story is, Willis has stated, an early, uncertain attempt at science fiction; and I'm glad to see it has not been airbrushed. I don't believe that writers should be encouraged to rewrite their own history. Major elements—the space-habitat High School, the peculiar teenage-speak—invoke the nineteen fifties rather than any future imaginable from 1990. But the Jeter story is equally anachronistic in tone. If fifties-style culture flags up *bad sex*, quickly, why not use it?

Clumsy, overlong, but effective and honest, the Willis story tells the secret that Freud discovered and then denied, a hundred odd years ago. The sexual abuse of children, by adult men, is one of the pillars of our society. Just as Jeter turns the screw (uh, sorry. I'm trying to keep these under control...) by making the penetration of a woman's body a bloody evisceration, Willis first shows us the abused child, then substitutes a helpless, mindless animal as Man's ideal sexual partner, and makes another point about the collaboration of the helpless in their own degradation. The two stories are strangely alike, a matched pair, even to the dehumanization of the victim.

Perhaps what Mr. Jeter and Ms. Willis have in common is a deeply held belief that the sexual status quo is immovable, a dreadful given that no one can escape. Other contributors have managed to skim over the horrors of normalcy, without becoming too mesmerized by existential despair. Sex is a parade of bleak moments and brittle laughs: Scott Baker's "The Jamesburg Incubus" is far more upbeat on this subject than "Varicose Worms," his powerful story from Datlow's previous anthology, *Blood is Not Enough*. The conclusion, coming down so ingeniously in favor of monogamy—and frugal habits!—should make "The Jamesburg Incubus" a good prospect for the Catholic Truth Society, if they do reprints. I liked (if that's the word) the quickly inserted penis extender in Rick Wilber's role-reversed "War Bride." The cute little native whose has to be fixed up so he can satisfy the alien... conjuring up gruesome reports from old Saigon, of torn vaginas stitched up several times a week. Leigh Kennedy's "Her Puffy Face" is a maybe more disturbing version of the Willis story, again equating woman and animal, and damning the insensitive, self-obsessed human

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male. Women writers identify themselves with animals: men attempt to identify themselves with women. In "When the Fathers Go," Bruce McAllister is making a valiant attempt at self-criticism, on behalf of his whole gender. The story "offers up Woman as the victim of the lies that men in our culture build out of the cultural myths that bind them Well, that's what it says in the authorial afterword. Unfortunately, McAllister's female narrator is such a good listener (!) that somehow the absconding male, pathological liar, manages to steal the story. *Plus ça change* . . .

Sex with the alien, alien invasion. Sometimes it's done simply. Roberta Lannes's "Saving the World at the New Moon Motel" is probably the nearest to what the unwary punter might have hoped for: a harmless bit of fun, with a plot and tentacles and almost nil political paranoia. In the light of the rest, it is interesting to note that this happens to be written by a woman. Sometimes the metaphor is doubled over. The aliens have invaded, and what do they want from us? Of course! It must be *bad sex*! Pat Cadigan and Ed Bryant both describe sex with the alien as a bizarre kind of obscene phone call. You're being used—intimately and against your will—by someone you can't ever meet, or face, or accuse . . . Ms. Cadigan's version is a cracker: witty and sharp and cool. Mr. Bryant takes the predicament of the sex object far more seriously—and yet another contributor finds reason to damn the human adult male. But totally. This begins to look like a conspiracy. But one of the strengths of this collection is that for every statement, a comment has been included. Almost any story by "James Tiptree, Jr." would add something to an anthology called *Alien Sex*. The one Ms. Datlow has chosen, "And I Awoke and Found Me on the Cold Hillside . . .," is precisely about the alien sex fiend as a human fiction. The aliens are here, and they aren't interested. Frankly, they don't give a damn.

"And I Awoke . . ." is a story written by a woman who was pretending—for a whole cocktail of reasons—to be a man. It foregrounds the plight of the male—cynically, satirically, maybe just as a marketing ploy. It also states, explicitly, that the deadly allure of Otherness is as strong for both sexes. It is a human need. The same point is made, more calmly, in the third part of Lisa Tuttle's triptych, "Husbands." I don't know why it should be, but it is certainly true that the female writers in *Alien Sex* treat their subject much more coolly, even while saying the most ghastly things. The (justified) hysteria of this book—and there's plenty—is all male; or male pretending to be female—or female pretending to be male, if you count Tiptree. Ms. Tuttle, like the other female contributors, seems to step back, to pick up the Nessus's shirt of sexuality and examine it, while wisely refusing to put the horrid thing on. The spurious air of detachment that the women achieve is no doubt a defense mechanism, and it does weaken

the punch of some powerful stories. Or it would: but not here. Lisa Tuttle's final image, of the post-gendered society obscurely driven to re-invent analogies of "masculine" and "feminine," should be read alongside K. W. Jeter. It is a mark of the intelligence that went into the shaping of this anthology that you need to have *both* stories in front of you. Then you get the full effect.

I would hesitate to propose *Alien Sex* as a barometer of the sexual climate of the *fin de siècle*. This is art, not sociology. The relentlessly bad press that the men get, especially from themselves, isn't necessarily a sign that in real life the guys are all in sackcloth and ashes. It's more likely a sign that they're still getting by far the best of the deal, *only now they know it*. Bad conscience is not the same, alas, as reformation of character. But the real tragic dilemma of human sexuality is made clear in none of the stories: it appears as an absence. Not one of these stories (Michaela Roessner's poem comes nearest) is written from the point of view of the alien. A sexual partner is a monster, an animal, a thief, a reflection, a victim; food. Mel Oh, I'm just *normal*. It's like a children's game of make-believe, where the baby has to be bullied into that essential role that nobody wants to play—Captain Hook, the simpering prince, a band of marauding oes . . . Everyone wants to pursue the Other, to explore the Other, to have the Other, to get inside the Other, to consume the Other, to be consumed by the Other. But nobody here wants to *be* the Other. It's a tough one. No wonder Ms. Datlow decided to give the last word to the last human being alive. And even there, in the non-human future, seen through Pat Murphy's wryly elegiac "Love and Sex Among the Invertebrates," it looks as if *la lutte continue* . . .

And finally, honorable mention must go to the two writers who grasped the nettle and actually wrote about sex, as in the good stuff, as in wet, sticky, physical pleasure. Like the Jeter/Willis pair, Richard Christian Matheson's "Arousal" and Geoff Ryman's "Omnisexual" have a peculiar back-to-back similarity. Each protagonist wakes up one day to find that everything, simply everything, has become orgasmic. The Matheson story is more mundane, a Da Palma-flavored sort of glossy contemporary surfaces, with a coldly sinister edge. "Omnisexual" seems to have no outer surface at all. It comes from an everpresent element in Geoff Ryman's writing that I personally find hard to take undiluted. Sexual and powerful this piece certainly is, but to read it is a lot like diving head first, open-mouthed, into a pool of warm, raw liver.

Oh well. Whatever turns you on. ▴

Gwyneth Jones is the author of *Divine Endurance*, *Escape Plans*, and *Kairoi*. She lives in Brighton, England.

The Brains of Rats by Michael Blumlein

Los Angeles: Screamp/Press, 1990; \$25.00 hc; 197 pages

reviewed by Donald G. Keller

The appearance of Michael Blumlein's first story, "Tissue Ablation and Variant Regeneration: A Case Report" in *Interzone* #7 (1984) was a revelation to me. Here was a new writer who, though American, was squarely in the tradition of the British *New Worlds* school that had seemed to push the envelope of fictional form so far forward in the late Sixties, before its influence waned: here was a voice that, for all its successful emulation of Ballard *et al.*, was new and utterly distinctive: clinical, precise, and spare, full of carefully-delineated detail, but remarkable in its imaginative lifting of its focus on the specifics of the human body into a symbolic realm of suggestive significance. The story's subject matter—an imaginary operation on Ronald Reagan to provide tissue whose regeneration would provide resources for the oppressed Third World—made it terribly controversial (it finished dead last in the *Interzone* Readers' Poll, though editor David Pringle noted that on positive comments alone it would have finished much higher); it was accused of cruelty, political stridency, moral unacceptability, etc. All reasonable subjective assessments; my own was that the story was legitimized by a cold anger lying behind its clinical surface, an anger at injustices that demanded to be redressed, even if only on paper (and it is a story well aware of its nature as an artifice).

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After this startling introduction, I made a point of reading every work of Blumlein's I could find, some half-dozen items over the space of as many years, the largest of them being his first novel *The Movement of Mountains* (St. Martin's). Despite many Blumleinian fingerprints, it is altogether more of a conventional if novel than I expected from him, and not entirely successful. It is to be hoped that his upcoming second novel, *A Native Land* (mentioned in the author's note to the volume at hand), will more fully embody his tight and undistracted focus on the philosophical implications of biology, consciousness, and gender.

In the interim, we have this collection of Blumlein's short fiction to date, a cornucopia showing his range as well as his consistency of vision. Some of the stories are in previously-established styles: "Interview with C.W." is an imaginary-celebrity interview, too short to accomplish much, but arresting in its concentration of bizzarries. "Keeping House" is a haunted-house story, told, as it were, from a Blumleinian version of the obsessed point of view of the Catherine Deneuve character in Polanski's *Repulsion*. "The Glitter and the Glamour," with less medical detail than usual, concerns movie stars kept prosthetically young.

"The Domino Master" (from *Owens*), a kind of fairytale, and "The Thing Itself" (from *Full Spectrum*), a rather odd love story, are unusual in Blumlein's output in that they simultaneously focus on everyday life while bringing the symbolic level firmly onstage in an almost magic-realist fashion; both are warmer in feel than most of his work. "The Domino Master" is particularly successful in its adoption of the narrative voice of a child.

"Drown Yourself" was first published in the cyberpunk issue of *The Mississippi Review*, and resembles William Gibson's collaboration "The Belonging Kind" (with John Shirley) in its bar setting and violent imagery; but the mindbending figure/ground reversal of its bombshell climax is indigenous to its author.

"The Promise of Warmth" (from *Twilight Zone*) owes something to Bradbury's "The Next in Line" and Ballard's "The Repelle Enclosure" in its weird-things-happening-to-tourists template, tropical lyricism of description counterpointing stark, enigmatic dialogue; it has a well-prepared and inevitable conclusion, but fails to follow through on the suggestion that its character's fate is shared by others. Even more Ballardian in the way it harmonizes its disparate cultural material (the Olympics, the Ragans, video, surgery) is "Shed His Grace," which, unlike a static Ballard piece, is superbly—though slowly—paced to its surprising, upsetting end; it surely works better in this company than among too many similarly-obsessed stories in *Snowwater* or *SP*.

I suppose it should not surprise me that "The Wet Suit" (as well as the lesser "Keeping House" and "The Glitter and the Glamour") is heretofore unpublished; it concerns personal secrets that become family secrets, and is disturbing precisely insofar as it is inscrutable. In his adulatory introduction, Michael McDowell notes that the story

ends "without resolution, or confrontation, or escalation." True; but it does end with an epiphany, in exactly the Joycean sense of the Dubliners stories; and it is an epiphany of ambiguity.

"Bestseller," his most recent story, from *PO-SF*, is particularly unsettling in its presumed use of material from Blumlein's own life: a writer who cannot bring himself to write saleable commercial novels resorts to selling his own body parts to keep his family solvent. Despite (because of) its blatant nonrealism—it does not pretend to be a more metaphorical representation of the writer's actual situation—it is a more honest story than Orson Scott Card's "The Lost Boys" (which more insidiously feigns verisimilitude) and thereby sadder and more horrible.

But perhaps Blumlein's finest achievement is the title story, also from *Interzone*. The biological subtext (opposite of subtext) is a sop to science-fictional verisimilitude; its real focus is a philosophical disquisition on gender. Are the sexes the same? Are they different? If so, how different? The story is ambivalent. It is the sort of work that explores feelings most of us have, however fleetingly, at one time or another; it can occupy a thoughtful reader for days afterward with one's own reactions to its implications.

Blumlein's art is discomfiting; it demands from the reader the same unflinching self-examination as the author's. Thus Blumlein will remain a controversial writer, for this process can be so painful and unpleasant that many readers will prefer not to subject themselves to it. But I believe that the introspective doubt inherent in his approach is his most valuable quality, and that he is an important writer due to his willingness to examine with a steady gaze that which is too personal to mention, too bizarre to admit. And too human to deny. ▲

Other Edens 3 edited by Christopher Evans and Robert Holdstock

London: Unwin Hyman, 1989; £4.50 tp; 269 pages

reviewed by Glenn Grant

... And then, within the stone circle near the village, the women gather, calling the Horned One from his slumber, and the blade falls, and the boy's blood spills upon the earth. The young Initiate takes the cup, and she drinks, and is welcomed into the Coven. The grim but necessary sacrifice is complete, protecting the village for another year, keeping at bay the shopping mall developers, the evil research scientists, the Christian witch-hunters, and—

Oh, but you've heard that one already? Well, it's one of those Archetypal Mythforms, isn't it? A thematic cluster or sub-genre that seems to crop up with increasing regularity in the *Other Edens* anthologies of British imaginative fiction, edited by Christopher Evans and Robert Holdstock. If you're not yet completely familiar with this particularly British sub-genre, the Rural Pagan Fantasy, you will be after you've read *Other Edens 3*.

Consider: "The Grey Wethers," by Keith Roberts, involving a witchlike girl who displays an unnatural affection for the local Paleolithic standing stones; Sherry Goldsmith's "The Way to His Heart," in which a culinary coven dispense a form of justice-through-magic; "Blessed Fields," by Simon D. Ings, about an agrarian culture's sacrificial fertility rites; and Gill Alderman's "Country Matters," concerning witches, an initiation into a coven, and the usual propitiatory human sacrifice.

While parts of the Keith Roberts story are intriguing, the whole fails to come into focus. The Ings story is the most interesting of the lot, with its casual brutality and erotic flavor, a strong showing for its first publication. Although every one of these four has merit, all are gratifyingly predictable.

True, a lot of people think that this sort of thing is Great Stuff, can't get enough of it, and one such person is co-editor Robert Holdstock. But if we've already read his own propitiatory-sacrifice story, "Scarrowsell," in the first *Other Edens* anthology, how many more variations on this archaic folk-riff (no matter how well-played) do we need to hear?

Due to this cluster of Pagan Fantasies, *Other Edens 3* is definitely weighted less toward the science fiction end of the spec-fic continuum

than the first two books of the series. Still, it's a varied assortment of contemporary fantasy and science fiction, combining *Other Edens* regulars—such as Garry Kilworth, Christopher Evans, and Brian Aldiss—and several relatively new writers—such as Eric Brown, Keith Brooke, Christina Lake, and Simon D. Ings. Sixteen stories in all, with a brief introduction to explain that the editors have no agenda other than quality and diversity—aside from the stricture that all of the authors must be native to, or based in, the United Kingdom. Unlike the first two mass-market books, the third anthology is a trade paperback, providing a slightly larger cover for the stunning Jim Burns painting to wrap itself around.

British sf is said to be obsessed with decay and collapse, given to somber and "pessimistic" meditations on the end of civilization—reflections of their own loss of empire, if you believe Gregory Benford (*Science Fiction Year #4*). There are at least two post-collapse stories in this collection: Christina Lake's "Wintertime Beauty," about a society decimated by plague; and "The New Mapper," by J. D. Gresham, in which the world's geography has been horribly altered by chemical warfare. Both are competent but unremarkable treatments of these themes; compare Tanith Lee's moving eco-disaster piece, "Crying in the Rain," which lead off the first *Other Edens*. It should be noted, however, that this anthology is not littered with celebrations of entropic dissolution or Ballardian zombies wistfully strolling through dead Londons, of the sort that might be found in, say, any old issue of *New Worlds* magazine.

One young British writer known for his "optimism" is S. M. Baxter. His contribution, "The Droplet," is a creaky particle-physics piece involving a godlike researcher and a lot more wishful thinking than plausible scientific extrapolation. I preferred it to his space-ships-and-alien "Xecler" series; at least he's trying to inject some convincing humanity into his characters, though he hasn't yet succeeded.

It does seem to be true that the British specialize in small-scale stories of individual psychologies and interpersonal relations, as opposed to the galactic themes of so much American sf. Louise Cooper's "Cry"

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is of this type, an impossible-love-affair melodrama which, apparently straining for literary ambiguity, withholds vital information from the reader, so I have yet to figure out why the protagonist's love is doomed; it's never made sufficiently clear. "Heart's Desire," Lisa Tuttle's account of a young woman's obsessive, unrequited love, has an unexpected and thought-provoking conclusion, despite one or two loose ends—hard to explain plot elements that do, at least, make thematic sense. (I certainly enjoyed it more than her ridiculous story, "The Wound," one of the few low points of the first *Other Edens*.)

Highlights of the first and second anthologies were the wonderful Garry Kilworth pieces, "Triptych" and "On the Watchtower at Placera." Consequently, it was disappointing to find that his collaboration with Christian Lehman, "When the Music Stopped," is merely a one-idea story, not quite poignant, and lacking Kilworth's characteristic flair for the bizarre. The anthology closes with "A Tupolev Too Far" by Brian Aldiss, a good alternate-world scenario: a man from another, sinner Earth is thrown (by one of those weirdly convenient electrical storms) into Brezhnev's Russia, the dreary Moscow of our own reality. Towards the end, the story loses momentum, wanders around for a bit, but eventually finds itself again.

I've saved my favorites for last. Christopher Evans contributes "The Walling Woman," the fourth of his five "Chimera" stories, an involving fantasy in which invisible spirits are sculpted into physical forms. It's the character relationships that make this one work, as the Chimera concept has already been well mapped out, earlier in the series. (It compares poorly to his story in the first *Other Edens*, but then "The Facts of Life" is perhaps the most powerful story in any of the three volumes.)

In Chris Morgan's "Losing Control," a starship commander maintains a stiff upper lip after crashing on a dangerous alien world, while his crew rely entirely on some helpful native life-forms for their survival. It's a humorously odd tale of crumbling patriarchal authority (and, interestingly, the only one in the collection that involves aliens). Eric Brown is in fine form with "Disciples of Apollo," an effective story of a love affair between two incurable disease-victims—a better work, in fact, than his popular *Interzone* story, "The Time-Lapsed Man." Perhaps the most original and bizarre contribution is Keith Brooke's "Passion Play," about the mating rituals of some devolved and flightless birdlike humans, spiced with absurd humor and convincingly imaginative biological strangeness.

Finally, there's "Rainmaker Cometh," which finds Ian McDonald continuing to out-do Bradbury on his own turf. A flashy retelling of a western American myth, with all of McDonald's hipster amplifier-dials turned up to eleven. Somehow he keeps it under control, and only hits a sour note when he refers to "boardings"—you know, those things that non-Brits (especially in the Southwest) would call "billboards." But this story is too good to be marred by a minor cultural slip.

Despite such flashes of quality, this volume is too full of weaker stories to measure up to the (admittedly high) standard set by *Other Edens* and *Other Edens 2*. Evans and Holdstock have shown us before that they can master more consistently interesting British sci-fi and fantasy than this book would suggest. Let's hope they can do so again, in their next collection. ▶

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Ellen R. Weil The Secret You:

Fantasy and Story in Brian Aldiss's Mainstream Fiction

Part II

Sheila is not so naïve—nor so oversimplified a character—as to be drawn directly into her imagined fantasy world, but she is drawn to the world of popular adulation which her writing makes available to her. *Forgotten Life* opens at the end of an enormously successful American tour promoting Sheila's latest book, during which she has begun an affair with her American editor. It ends with her briefly succumbing to the temptation to make this unreal world of fame and adulation her way of life. The fantasy world of Kerinth has given rise to the more immediate fantasy world of Green Mouth, and Sheila plays the role to the hilt—even to wearing green lipstick and dressing in regal costumes in the presence of her fans. She "had thrown real things away for a dream, a fantasy," thinks Clement. "The nature of the real world was that it required forgiveness; but the hard fact, against which so many of his clients wrecked themselves, was that imaginary worlds were so much more delusory, ultimately so much nastier" (282).

Is Clement right? It somehow seems unlikely that an author who has himself made a successful career out of the creation of imaginary worlds expects us to take that last statement entirely uncritically, particularly when Clement himself had earlier acknowledged that "No one could bear too much reality" (192). But it does reveal something about Clement, who in some ways the most disturbing character in the book. Clement also represents Aldiss's greatest challenge of characterization. In a sense, Aldiss has left little of his own story available for Clement: Joseph's childhood and wartime experiences closely resemble Aldiss's own, and Aldiss's success as a popular novelist is assigned to Sheila, so where does Clement come from? If Joseph's story is one of mythologizing one's own experience, and Sheila's is one of creating new imaginary worlds, what is Clement's story?

One answer might simply be that the diurnal world of Oxford, with the routine of seeing patients and working on his research, is enough for Clement. Another possible answer may lie not in Aldiss's life, but in his works. Throughout his career Aldiss has seemed fascinated by the possibility of creating mythologies of status. One of his earliest stories, "Outside" (1955), concerns a group of characters who live unchanging lives in an almost featureless apartment. His first science fiction novel, *New-top* (1958), is about a society which evolves over generations in

the unchanging environment of a starship. *Greybeard* (1964) depicts a world gradually winding down after children have ceased being born. *Report on Probability A* (1968), his controversial experiment with the "antinode," describes characters who "remain motionless in a static world" (McNelly, 252). The richly detailed city state of Malacia in *The Malacia Tapestry* (1976) must remain forever unchanged in order to survive. On Heliocoria, a year lasts nearly twenty-six centuries. In the short story "An Appearance of Life," two holographic images stored in a vast galactic museum repeat the same meaningless conversation endlessly until their power source runs down.

The examples could probably go on, but the point is that for Aldiss, there is something dangerously hypnotic about conditions of stasis—or, in more science fictional terms, conditions of entropy. And it is just such a condition that Clement seems to find himself in. More than any other character in *Forgotten Life*, he is associated with the house in Oxford where he lives, with the predictable routines of daily life, and with what we in the States might call a "normal career path." "My life seems devoid of myths," he muses at one point. "It's stuffed with contemporary history instead" (79). Elsewhere, Clement wonders if he has the proper temperament to write about his brother. "It was true he [Clement] did not have revelations. Life had to be lived on a lowplane, without sudden glimpses of the numinous" (171). He is the observer and explainer, and his myth, if it can be characterized at all, is the myth of having no myth. At one of the few points in the novel when Aldiss brings together the various stories of Joseph, Sheila, and Clement, Clement is remembering a production of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, and is reflecting on the Tristan legend. Joseph has lived just such a high romance with his Chinese lover Mandy, and Sheila's Kerinth novels are full of such romance, but when Clement thinks of it in terms of myth, he only speculates on papers he has written or could write—*Irresponsibility in the Tristan Legend, Confused Moral Attitudes in the Kerinth Novels*, his thesis on adaptability (130-131). As Joseph tells Clement during one of their rare conversations, "I'm a Dionysiac, you're Apollonian" (216). It is ironically appropriate that the book's closest approach to overt supernaturalism is an experience of Clement's.

Tsvetan Todorov's famous definition of the fantastic as the uncer-

Jonathan V. Post
Hypertext Sonnet*:
 Lines from Robert Silverberg's
Star of Gilyver

New York: Donald I. Fine, 1986

The ectoplasmic life has its joys but p. 249
 time had come to drop everything and run p. 11
 you can't make love to a ghost but p. 70
 you can certainly last after one p. 70

Of many worlds, lords of the roads of night p. 37
 of worlds within our one galaxy p. 88
 the blue pearl of old Earth hung suddenly p. 29
 Romany Star's red . . . a brilliant blue-white p. 51

Sit on the bank of a river and wait p. 248
 How can you get bored with infinity? p. 237
 I began . . . but by then it was too late p. 44
 there is an infinity of worlds p. 32
 an uncharted gulf . . . that sea is alive. p. 118
 There are the Three Laws. The One Word is: Survive! p. 10

* 14 Windows into an existing text

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 27 June 1990

taint that exists until an apparently impossible event is resolved into the "uncanny" or the "marvelous" seems nowhere better illustrated than in the apparent materialization of Joseph's ghost to Clement. Clement is visiting his dead brother's flat in Acton when he suddenly finds himself incapable of moving. Time seems to pass in "dull, thick pulses" (172), and in the kitchen Clement sees a man washing his hands. The soap continues to tumble in midair as the man—Joseph, of course—dries his hands and approaches Clement. He offers a single message—"Everything worked out all right" (173)—before disappearing. Only later does Clement learn of Joseph's visit from his anima with its consoling message, and that in fact things *did* work out for Joseph. The vision of the ghost might be accountable, as Clement suspects, by stress, but the preexistence of its message is never explained.

For Clement, this message, together with his discovery of Joseph's own self-reconciliation, seems to absolve him of having to make order out of his brother's life. But it does not free him of his own story, his own apparent failure to get his life in motion. When Sheila leaves, he makes half-hearted plans for an affair and briefly contemplates suicide ("he was not desperate enough to do it" [283]), but finally just returns to the house, pours a glass of wine, and tries to read. Quick to condemn Sheila for her failure to face reality, Clement is equally guilty of failure to face fantasy. Yet he is far from the villain of the piece, and in many ways is

the most generous figure in the book. Like Tom in *Brothers of the Head*, he only wants to live a normal life, but he lacks any clear guidelines as to what a normal life might be.

"We all live a great proportion of our lives in a surrender to stories about our lives, and about other possible lives," writes Wayne C. Booth (14). To a greater or lesser extent, these stories may seem fantastic or mythological, dominated by steel-engraving angels or imaginary planets. They may repress us for decades, or liberate us in a period of grief; they may lead us toward irresponsible or self-destructive acts, or bring us enormous fame and financial rewards. In *Forgotten Life*, even the most minor characters seem to have such governing stories—Clement's aunt Doris, for example, who fifty years later is still defined by a bizarre episode in the thirties when her husband ran off with a South American lady, or Clement's client Parr, who used to serve in the secret service. Even Michélin, the French woman who acts as the Winters' unofficial housekeeper and whose life seems thoroughly senseless and uneventful, finds her "story" late in life when she falls in love and abruptly runs off with a lawyer from France. In nearly all cases, these stories have one thing in common: they permit us to act. Fantasy becomes a kind of bulwark against stasis. But Clement has surrendered to no stories, unless one regards living in Oxford as a story in itself, and it is stasis which seems to grip Clement's life. Joseph may have misunderstood his own life, as he claims after his visit from the anima, and Sheila may be fooling herself when she runs off to live as Green Mouth, but at least they *do* something, even if their actions are based on imperfect understanding.

In *The Shape of Further Things*, Aldiss writes of "the hypocritical conspiracy of perfection that seeks to lock each of us within the cages of our own experience" (quoted in Griffin and Wingrove, 153). The phrase seems especially apt for the traps in which Clement, Joseph and Sheila find themselves. All three of them, as Samuel Hynes says in his review of the novel, "distort and suppress and misinterpret real events for their own protection and consolation. Each has a forgotten life" (10). During the course of the novel, Hynes argues, "these forgotten lives are forced into consciousness, and the world is reconstituted—a painful and uncomfortable place, but real" (10). It would be possible to read the novel—as Hynes almost does—as an argument against the fantastic, pointing up the simple moral that "real is better." But is Clement's resolutely unfantastic life so much better (or worse) than Sheila's or Joseph's? It seems more likely that Aldiss is exploring the various ways we can use fantasy and stories to survive, to give structure and meaning to what would otherwise be forgotten lives. Even misunderstood or badly used stories, he seems to suggest, are less hazardous to our health than living without stories altogether. Perhaps for Clement, a quiet life in Oxford is story enough. Perhaps his story is still in the process of becoming. In the words of Novlis, "Our life is no dream, but it should and perhaps will become one."

Our apologies to all concerned for two errors in this piece last issue. We neglected to mention that the first installment was part one of two, and a change of punctuation confused the meaning of the first sentence of the third paragraph. That line should read, "Nor is there much reason to infer a very wide distance between Aldiss, Horacio Schwab, and Joseph Winter in Forgotten Life—at least in terms of raw experience."

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Cathedrals in Inner Space

Continued from page 1

hostility. On one occasion some ne'er-do-well hobbling around with his foot up in plaster went so far as to beat me about the head with his crutch.

Platt's remarks indicate the depth of the passions aroused by the New Wave-Old Wave controversy. And while it is in the main accurate to say that during the sixties the *sf* field could with relative ease be broken up into two sects—those who wrote of most readers could recognize as traditional and those whose work, on the surface at least, indicated a radical break with the past—this perception must be moderated by the observation that the New Wave really was, as Harlan Ellison has phrased it elsewhere, “a bunch of writers simply getting pissed off at the same time.” Few artists, of whatever convictions, actively solicit membership in a formalized school of creation; most *sf* authors, as a matter of fact, are too hard-headed to view themselves as being so easily susceptible to the influence of their colleagues. However, much, if not most, of the work of the so-called New Wave writers was initially published in many of the identical outlets, such as *New Worlds*, or reprinted in Judith Merril anthologies, because those happened to be the publishing venues most receptive to the kind of thing they just happened to be writing.

So what was it, exactly, that made a story New Wave, at least in the minds of many readers? It was more than just the publishing venue; but defining that something is a little more complex than merely pointing a finger at it; a James Tiptree, Jr., story originally published in *Analog*—that bastion of traditional *sf* edited by the man who was once the grand architect of his own revolution, John W. Campbell—could later reveal its “liberated” tendencies when placed in a similarly “liberated” anthology or Tiptree collection. Meanwhile, an Old Wave story such as Paul Anderson’s “Journey’s End” (1957) might flaunt its very accomplished experimental narrative techniques when placed at the end of a reprint anthology such as *Dark Stars* (1969), edited by Robert Silverberg. If the stories themselves could switch from one set to the other, how could one expect any less of their authors? Ultimately the term New Wave was and is only a verbal handle, enabling the critic to grab hold of a sieve through which he can pour the sandy water of his own observations. So in the final analysis, it doesn’t even matter whether or not individual writers considered themselves part of the New Wave set, because the parameters of nearly all literary sets always change with the passing of time, and generally at the whims of critics.

In no case is this more apparent than in the so-called distinction frequently made between works of a “popular” and “literary” nature. Time, in fact, is apt to erase all distinctions. For instance, the Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun, whose first book, *Hunger* (1890), has been called the first genuine 20th-century novel, created a body of work that might appear to have little in common with that of the famed American naturalist Jack London. *Hunger* is an angry, cynical book written in the early *avant-garde* tradition, and is more an impressionistic character sketch than it is a plotted story; so in the view of some it might consequently be viewed as oblique, deliberately vague, unfocused, and probably an affront to all fictional values. Like Hamsun’s other early work, the prose is hallucinatory and the themes revolve around certain emotional and spiritual matters. The novel was clearly meant to communicate its ideas to well-educated, aristocratic readers with a touch of rebellion in their souls.

London, on the other hand, made his initial sales to the magazines we now call the pulps. The pulps openly shunned all elitist artistic values, and were a natural home for London’s direct, robust style. At no point in any of his narratives, I think, would an intelligent reader have difficulty figuring out what is on the author’s mind. A contemporary writer more different than Hamsun, one would think, would be difficult to find. Unless, that is, one takes delight in comparing and contrasting the writings of E.E. “Doc” Smith and William Faulkner.

Yet London’s *Martin Eden* (1909) bears a startling resemblance to *Hunger*, although the authors approach themes and even plot points from opposite angles. Both novels are autobiographical explorations of the struggles of young writers. But while Hamsun’s unnamed narrator fights success in order to suffer, Martin Eden suffers in order to achieve

success. Eden begins his rite of passage by returning to land from the sea, while Hamsun’s narrator concludes with his hero giving up his dreams, for the moment, to take a job as a sailor on an ocean voyage—this is his way of giving up his suffering, in order to heal his psyche and become well, because though young and naïve in many ways, he already knows too much about the world. But in this case knowledge does not equate with experience, because experience is precisely what Hamsun’s character lacks. Martin Eden, in contrast, possesses much experience, but knows little of the ways of the world. He is, ironically, hungry for knowledge. But though Eden is more of an industrious optimist than Hamsun’s narrator, he is a doomed romantic hero who in the end cannot absolve himself of his demons. Hamsun’s character finds life in failure; Eden finds death in success.

Even so, both novels deal with outsiders trying to become respectable members of society, and both novels set in this regard social critiques that come to similar conclusions. And in both cases the acceptance of society is symbolized, for the protagonists, by their desire for the love of a woman. Neither heroine, significantly, can understand why the protagonists struggle the way they do. Both heroines love the protagonists in their own special ways. But while Hamsun’s protagonist is simply too emotionally distraught to make the right connections—the object of his affection practically throws herself at his feet, and speaks of the urge quite eloquently—Eden’s love can only offer herself to him after he has become successful—and after her family desperately needs his money. Again, both authors are saying the same thing, but in different ways; they are saying that in order for the artist to remain true to himself and to survive, he must resolve to forswear, forever, respectability and the love of society, even if the isn’t sure why. And they say this thing in two entirely different narrative traditions: the elite, artsy style of Hamsun, which has come to dominate much of 20th-century literature, and the straight-ahead approach of London, which is derived, basically, from 19th-century prose forms.

The straight-ahead 19th-century tradition is still a dominant factor in *sf* and fantasy writing today. On the other hand, the *avant-garde* tradition of experiment with function and form invaded the precious bubble of the modern popular arts long before the official advent of the New Wave. If you look at even a relatively obscure story such as George Clayton Johnson’s “The Hornc” (1962), which was originally published in that direct descendant of the pulps, the men’s magazine, you’ll see there’s something cinematic, almost experimental (in the literal sense of the word) about the prose, as if the author is attempting to take apart reality and rebuild it according to his own designs. *Sf* and fantasy writing, contrary to what Old Wave supporters believed, has an extensive and honored tradition of experimentation, one which began long before the advent of the New Wave. *Sf* and Modern Literature are in fact only parts of a much greater sea, and many times have found themselves breaking upon identical shores. Fritz Lang’s 1926 film *Metropolis*, for instance, not only influenced much *sf*, both in writing and film, but was also the culmination of the German Expressionist movement in cinema. Yet, with a few exceptions such as Kurt Vonnegut’s “crossover” act in the ‘60s, Modern Lit has pretty much remained Modern Lit and *sf* has pretty much remained *sf*.

This is because both their traditions have the ability to absorb whatever influence happens to be around at the time and use it for their own distinct purposes. This is normal. All art routinely lifts ideas from elsewhere, and blends them to accord with its own basic purpose. It is the essence of the creative act.

This natural human practice, when taken up by what one might regard as the first group of *avant-garde* writers in Western history, resulted in the birth of *sf* itself, while establishing many of its basic principles. Like their New Wave descendants of the 1960s, this group of writers espoused ideas their elders believed daring and revolutionary. They rode waves of reason, revolution, and reaction in their lives as well as in their art. They ignored prevailing social mores, questioned the values of their elders, and read and were deeply influenced by some of the trashiest literature of their day. Intent upon pushing the outside of the envelope, they railed against injustice and tyranny. They were privileged, and given to long flights of self-indulgence. In an age when the revolutionary advances in science and invention were sufficient to cause great social upheavals, for the potential benefit of a few, they reacted positively to the new ideas about the nature of freedom

generated through the purely intellectual implications of the then-latest scientific reasonings. They looked to the classicism of the distant past, and took what they considered the best of their immediate forbears, throwing the rest away.

It was no wonder that, against a background like that, Science Fiction was invented—by Mary Shelley, with the writing of *Frankenstein* in 1817. Shelley established many literary conventions and, more importantly, set forth rhetorical points of view that New Wave writers, even as they rebelled against the prevailing narrative modes of the day, often adhered to in surprising ways. Joyce Carol Oates writes, in an afterword to the 1984 Pennyroyal edition of the novel:

But it is a mistake to wish to read *Frankenstein* as a modern novel of psychological realism, or as a "novel" at all. It contains no characters, only points of view; its concerns are pointedly moral and didactic; it makes no claims for verisimilitude of even a poetic Wordsworthian nature. (The Alpine landscapes are all self-consciously sublime and theatrical; Mont Blanc, for instance, suggests "another earth, the habitations of another race of beings.")

New Wave or otherwise, if still tends to possess these traits, either in whole or in part, but much of that is unavoidably due to the basic fantasy, or deviation from known reality, behind its creative premises. Consequently much of the field's intellectual development has been concerned with inventing new rules with "better" standards of speculative verisimilitude, resulting in a book being criticized for having a reentry trajectory off by one tenth of a degree or for not having the serial numbers on a weapon match, as if the entire point of the game is to write a book that would fool a future alien archaeologist into believing that a randomly excavated sf story contains a form of realism comparable to that of *War and Peace*. Certain authors have remained more sensitive to this staginess than others, and some have sought to turn it into a distinct advantage—such as Thomas M. Disch in "The Squirrel Cage" (1967) and Philip K. Dick in *Time Out of Joint* (1965), or more recently Clive Barker in "The Hellbound Heart" (1986) and Kim Stanley Robinson in "The Disguise" (1977). In such works, the abstractions of surrealistic thinking have plainly merged with the more visceral demands of traditional narrative.

So it's in their common ability to *actualize* their symbolism that sf and avant-garde writing per se are most closely aligned. Whereas in a linear story, characters may be symbolically linked or form thematic contrasts of one another, for purposes of dramatic irony, only in sf can the secret, enigmatic subconscious reveal itself so completely and still retain that old-fashioned externalized flavor.

Sf and Modern Lit also share common metaphysical preoccupations, though again sf tends to take them literally, while Modern Lit strives to be as purely metaphorical as possible. Arthur C. Clarke, for instance, has his scientists systematically sift through "The Nine Billion Names of God" in order to fulfill life's purpose, whereas Pirandello creates "Six Characters in Search of an Author" who step off the stage in search of a game plan for life that is never revealed. For as E.E. Smith responded to the social upheaval caused by the combination of the new sciences and World War I by casting his nets in outer space, the Surrealists on the other side of the ocean were casting theirs inward. Smith wished to reveal and explore the conceptual breakthrough of man's new place in the universe, in a galaxy where time was limitless and so were the new alien races for man to encounter; whereas the Surrealists' purpose was nothing less than to reveal the workings of the subconscious. Surrealist work—like the older trend of expressionism—heavily relied on dream imagery, seeking to recreate the world inside, what J.G. Ballard was later to term inner space. But in reading a *Skydark* or a *Leviathan* novel, the contemporary reader learns more about Smith's mental landscape than he does about man's place in the universe.

Now if the New Wave had been a nice and neat literary movement, the reaction against the archetypal "can-do" sf hero, the reeducation toward a suspicious attitude toward progress, and a more direct connection with the imagery and themes of Modern Lit, would have been sufficient unto themselves for the writers and readers to rest on their collective laurels, content in the knowledge that once again in the history of Modern sf, another decade equalled another era, with an

influx of new writers invigorating the genre with new approaches. And it is true that many argued, as many had argued in previous decades, that the innovations had gone too far, that the precious bodily fluids of the genre were being polluted by this New Wave thing. But it is possible that all these changes would have been absorbed into the field with only a moderate amount of protests had they not been accompanied by another phenomenon of the sixties, the sudden popularity of experimental writing in Modern Lit. During the sixties authors such as Donald Barthelme, Immanuel Reed, Robert Coover, LeRoi Jones, John Fowles, William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, and Kurt Vonnegut captured the hearts and minds of college students and members of the *intelligentsia* everywhere. [If they had one thing in common, it was their willingness to do away with accepted notions of plot and structure and even character in order to do what was necessary to create new narrative forms they believed more appropriately reflected the reality they perceived around them. They were so successful at reaching their potential audience that even that bastion of literary excellence, *The New Yorker*, seemed like it was publishing more experimental writing than the kind of story the magazine's audience most associated with *The New Yorker*, such as those by John Cheever. For a while there it seemed that narrative story-telling was going to specialize so much that it would eventually evolve itself out of existence.]

A similar kind of evolution was threatening to happen in Modern sf. Certain readers and critics and editors in the field resented it, and could not understand why editors such as Moorcock and Merrill seemed so willing to champion these intrusive innovations inspired by Modern Lit. To these readers Moorcock and Merrill were just going along with a fad.

But of course in championing innovative writing, Moorcock and Merrill were simply being open-minded about permitting themselves to

Anne McCaffrey My Favorite Story

Writers are always being asked why they wrote a particular story. Most of the time we may not have an obvious reason. I had to find out why I wrote "The Ship Who Sang." First published in *Fantasy and Science Fiction* in April 1961. But it is, and probably always will be, my favorite.

It has flaws and certainly, with nearly 30 years of publishing behind me now, I would bring stronger skills to its writing now, but then, those skills would not improve the underlying force of the yarn. Why? Because I *felt* the story so deeply and so keenly, with all the passion of a deep and festering grief, that that grief still hit an unwary reader (including me) with the same force that it carried when it was first written.

Oddly enough, "Ship" was hand-written, and then typed out. I distinctly remember I was sitting in my bed (safe from my kids for the moment) as I wrote the final few pages. I had tears dripping down my cheeks onto the paper as I killed off my hero "as black space echoed back the song the ship sang." But I knew it was dramatically correct, and effective. I did not realize as I wrote that I was trying to assuage my grief over my father's death. I still am. And every time I read that story aloud, any time a reader is moved by that last poignant phrase, the story notches up another tribute to my father.

In those early '60s, science fiction was not supposed to be emotional or emotive. There were very few strong women characters and certainly the notion of cyborgs was still new and relatively unexplored. So "The Ship Who Sang"/*Helva* had more impact then than perhaps she does now. Yet, to judge by the fact that it is my most frequently reprinted story, appearing in secondary school texts and many anthologies, the story can obviously still grab its audience. "The Ship Who Sang" remains the story I am proudest of writing. Here's to you, Dad!

be influenced by what was happening elsewhere in the arts. Because one can, without stretching the imagination much, pinpoint the influence of Hemingway in Heinlein's prose or that of Thomas Wolfe in the early writings of van Vogt, just to give two examples, then it's also not a stretch to understand that it was entirely natural for authors such as Ballard, Delany and Saxton to be hip to what was happening *now*. And if their experiments were radical, it was because experimentation everywhere during the sixties was radical. And because, as I've implied in the case of *Hunger*, yesterday's experiment often proves to be today's tradition.

Besides, when one grows up reading experimental writing alongside traditional narrative forms, then it's only natural for the young writer to believe that the experimental approach is just as artistically valid as any other. And for a good portion of the 20th century, the history of the arts amounts to a history of innovation, experimentation, and artistic success.

By the sixties, there were also many examples of actual sf stories that demonstrated that formal experimentation could be quite effective. For instance, in Henry Kuttner's modest 1948 effort, "Happy Ending," the Ending is told first, followed by the Middle, which by its conclusion gives the reader a totally different interpretation of the events related in the Ending. Kuttner writes, "This is the way the story starts:" and then proceeds to give the reader an entirely different slant on all that's gone before, so that the combined meaning of both the Ending and the Middle changes once again.

Alfred Bester willingly took up the lessons gained from the Futurists (especially the Russian variety) and poets such as e.e. cummings, who sought to free typography from the constraints of columns and straight lines. He attempted to use these freedoms, in the 1959 story, "The Pi Man," to impress upon the reader the truly surreal kind of transformations and thought patterns his character was experiencing.

"That's why I can't have friends or let myself fall in love. Sometimes the patterns turn so ugly that I have to make frightful sacrifices to restore the design. I must destroy something I love."

"This is sacrifice?"

"Isn't it the only meaning of sacrifice, Sawyer? You give up what's dearest to you."

"Who to?"

"The Gods. The Fates. The Big Pattern that's controlling me. From where? I don't know. It's too big a universe to comprehend, but I have to beat its tempo with my actions and reactions, emotions and senses, to make the patterns come out even, balanced in some way that I don't understand. The pressures that

whipsaw
me
back and
and turn
forth me
and into
back the
and transcendental
forth 3.14159+

and maybe I talk too much to R. Sawyer and the patterns pronounce: PI MAN, IT IS NOT PERMITTED.

So. There is darkness and silence.

Needless to say, Bester was lionized by those associated with the New Wave. Authors such as Bester, Cordwainer Smith, Theodore Sturgeon, and Charles Harness made the experimentation of the sixties inside the genre as inevitable as did the examples of William Burroughs and Donald Barthelme did from without. In addition, it's worthwhile to point out that Jorge Luis Borges, the blind Argentine librarian who did for fiction and essays what Escher did for art, also came into English-language prominence during the sixties. He was just the first of a long line of experimental writers from South America to make a substantial impact on the craft of storytelling. Borges's work presented empirical

proof, as it were, that style and story cannot be fruitfully discussed as separate entities. Style and story are in truth one and the same, and this also applies to the concepts plot and structure. Authors such as Ballard who were interested in creating stories that had never been told before, in using plots that had never been used before, could always look to Borges and his literary actions such as Cortázar and García Márquez for inspiration. That is, when they got tired of looking to William Burroughs.

The long and honored tradition of experimental writing, though, doesn't explain in itself the reason why there was such an explosion of experimentation during the sixties. Perhaps the explosion occurred simply because it was explosion time.

... The world, both of ideas and of facts, has changed so radically that man needs a new initiation. The new story forms, bizarrely experimental and outspokenly hostile to previous conventions, are the artistic expression of this rite. Critics have unintentionally discounted the new stories' validity by habitually describing them in negative terms. Seen as "anti-stories," exercises as if in parody against traditional elements of plot, subject, development, and meaning, the fiction of such writers as Barthelme and Coover hardly seems a positive expression in man's continuing relationship with the world. But the new story exists in its own right, and, far from being simply a satiric echo of earlier forms, it speaks for a new order of existence—and a necessarily new perception of that existence...

The world is new, and its experiences must be known by a new epistemology. Story writers experiment with new systems, coming to know the irrational or relativistic through something other than the older rational forms.

—"Innovative Short Fiction: 'Vile and Imaginative Things'"
by Jerome Klinkowitz
& John Somer (1972)

And if it seems there is something almost Messianic about the justification for experimental writing as quoted above, then it is probably no coincidence that many New Wave stories deal with religious or metaphysical themes. Even before the sixties, many excellent sf stories had been built around various religious themes, and the stories were as likely to be idealistic on some levels as they were cynical on others. For here the New Wave differed from the experimental writing happening elsewhere in the arts. The author was as apt to hang his innovations on a hoary old dramatic structure as he was apt to conceive new ones. Sf at its best has always been intellectually rigorous in any case, and in this regard the New Wave ultimately preserved yet another sf tradition.

Yet the New Wave also extended and perpetuated the traditions of Modern Literature. Just as time has erased the thematic differences, at least, between New and Old Wave writers (what book could possibly be more psychedelic than *Dune*?), time will also cause the distinctions between New Wave writers and certain purveyors of Modern Lit to blur. Can it therefore be that in the centuries to come, literary historians will look upon the entirety of 20th-century writing and see not the distinctions between the writings of different countries and cliques and camps, but only their similarities? For just as the contrasts between certain writings of Hamsun and London merely highlight the compatibility of their worldviews, it may very well be that time will cause similar critical alterations of perspectives to occur on the works of García Márquez and Ballard, Cortázar and Wolfe, Heller and Shekley, Calvino and Carroll, and Amado and LaFey. The literary sets will have remained the same, but the players will have changed time and time again, until they find themselves crashing upon shores they have never known.

This article is adapted from the introduction to a forthcoming anthology of New Wave fiction.

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The Year's Best Science Fiction: Seventh Annual Collection,
edited by Gardner Dozois

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990; 624 pp.; \$14.95 paperback

reviewed by Fernando Q. Gouvêa

In some ways, it feels rather silly to write a review of this book. What is there to say that hasn't been said before? Every sci-fi reader who likes short stories (and for some reason there seem to be precious few of them) probably knows that this is the place to look for a good overview of the previous year. It is a big fat book, so there's space for a wide selection. Editor Gardner Dozois has, in general, excellent taste, so that his picks are certain to be at least interesting. Of course, you may not agree with him as to which stories are the best, but that's as may be: here is a collection of very good sci-fi stories, which certainly deserves to be widely read.

The overall package is as usual: there is an overview of the year in sci-fi by Dozois, useful and perceptive as always, except for the section on the sci-fi magazines, where Dozois is hobbled by the fact that he edits one of them. (In any case, one may deduce, in a general way, his estimates of the magazines by checking where he found his stories.) There is an

"honorable mention" list at the end of the book, which is basically useless because it's too long; it amounts to every story by every notable writer, plus a few more. One would be happier with a "second volume" list, i.e., with a list of the stories Dozois would have included if he had twice the space.

And then there are the stories, a total of twenty-five, including four that I would describe as novellas. (This has always been one of Dozois's advantages: the size of this book allows him to include the longer stories that are perhaps the most interesting kind of short sci-fi form.) Most of them come from *LASPM* (nine) and *F&SF* (four). Seven of them come from less obvious sources: original anthologies (*Full Spectrum 2*, *The New Frontier*), small-press magazines (*PulpScience*, *Strange Plasma*—a real coup for this new publication), even a convention program-book. There are no stories from *Analog*, which may reflect (take your pick) the current low quality of that magazine or the editor's bias against the kind

Paul Williams
from *Rock and Roll: The 100 Best Singles*

The Beatles
"Please Please Me"

Start over. Follow these simple instructions. Get a set of headphones and a sound system with some kind of decent amplifier, and a copy of "Please Please Me" (album, single, cassette, CD, whatever you can find—if you don't have it, knock on the two or three doors closest to your domicile, you'll come up with a copy, guaranteed). Turn off the speakers and listen to the song on headphones a couple of times. Then turn up the volume as high as you think you can bear and listen to it a few more times.

Keep going. Louder. Crank that sucker up. Push your limits.

Louder. Come on, you could be saving yourself thousands of dollars of psychotherapy here. Louder! That's it. Over the top. Breakthrough. Bliss. Release. Your heart is pounding, your bones are vibrating, your spirit wants to push away the walls of the world and scream to the far galaxies. "Come on (*come on*), Come on (*come on*), Come on (*come on*), Come on (*COME ON!*)"—I swear to God, it's like I never heard this record before, never really understood what the Beatles were all about until this evening. It's not that I haven't gone this far, but I guess I was just too proud to let those absurdly popular, universally palatable Beatles be the ones to bring me here.

I was a fool. This record is as tough and as revolutionary as anything any punk or heavy metallist ever attempted. It could kill you. It could set you free.

There's a story (which I believe) that when the Beatles were nobodies freshly arrived in Hamburg, being jerked around by the owner of some low dive where they were playing, John Lennon became so frustrated he stamped his foot on the stage while performing, trying to destroy it, venting his wrath (at God, as much as anyone), and the audience took it as part of the act, loved it, noticed the boys for the first time, required them to stamp through every song, every night, turned them into local celebrities.

The best. We are (be truthful, now) unhappy with our lot, much of the time, and our expressed rage (at matters small

and large) chokes our aliveness, cuts us off from love and joy and spontaneity and the sunshine on the hilltops. Noise comes in at us all the time, direct and indirect, including a whole new order of noise in this industrial vehicular electronic age, and we goddamn well need to give it back sometimes. And the beat's the answer, our salvation, our expression, our grounding device. Make it big. Lay it on thick. Look at what can be jammed into a single record, one minute and fifty-eight seconds! The Beatles came at the problem with a different perspective than Phil Spector, who was making major progress in beat-enlargement on his side of the Atlantic. Spector knew the studio, took charge of it, recreated it to his own specifications, mind over matter, the genius. The Beatles knew nothing, didn't care to know (not yet). Instead they (John in particular) got the intuition of what they wanted, a glimmering, a whiff, and lunged for it, demanding it to be theirs. Nothing would stand in their way, they were too young and hungry and adrenalized-crazed to be denied. Two-track recording? Great! We'll mix it out to one-track and pound through it again, sound on sound, louder, harder, fatter. Horn section? I'll do it on the harmonica. Harmonies? Okay, everybody sing at once now. Rhythm? Play the dirtiest bass line you can think of. Ringo can handle the rest on the drums. Wham! Wham! Wham!

Spirit over matter. Mind hardly enters into it. You just reach out for the possible and trust your inspiration, trust your medium, let loose your stampeding energies and don't look back. Say anything that comes into your mind. Bitch about your sexual hang-ups with the missus. It doesn't matter. They'll hear it as a love song.

Or a call to arms. "If I had my way," says Rev. Gary Davis. "If I had my way, in this wicked world, if I had my way, I would tear this building down." The Beatles smiled while they said it, and the world was theirs. They harmonized, with a vengeance. They rock and rolled. They kicked ass. They started something. ▶

First release: Parlophone R 4983 (UK), January 1963

of story it publishes. Most surprising: there is only one story from *Omnis*, which, though it publishes little fiction, should have the pick of the crop, since it pays the most.

Going on to the stories themselves, we find quite an interesting bunch; let's look at them all, and try to see what they tell us about sf in 1989. (Spoiler alert: this discussion assumes you've read the stories.) We start off with a fascinating novella by Judith Moffett, "Tiny Tango." This is part of a series of stories about the Hefin and their contact with humanity, as in most of these, the aliens remain on the sidelines of an essentially human story, in this case a story about AIDS and its impact on the life of a person who survives by playing things safe in a rather radical way, only to have reality brutally intrude into her cloistered world at the end. The result is very interesting, though I found the reactor meltdown at the end to be rather arbitrarily introduced. This is not to say, of course, that real life doesn't include some arbitrary and unexpected disasters, but the author has set up a question for the reader here—is the heroine's sacrifice a reasonable one, i.e., is it worthwhile to stay alive for such a diminished kind of existence—which she doesn't really answer. All she does is point out that reality often will not permit such a choice to be consistently lived out—but what if it did?

The second story in the book is Charles Sheffield's "Out of Copyright," which, coming right after the Moffett, strikes one as lightweight: it is based on a "nifty idea," but does nothing much with its premise beyond setting up a (rather predictable) twist ending.

Next comes Mike Resnick's "For I Have Touched the Sky," a sequel to "Kirimaya," which was extensively discussed in *NYRSF* last year. What made "Kirimaya" so impressive (and so controversial) was the way the author seemed to accept the actions of his protagonist, the ruthless "mundumugu" who uses advanced technology to recreate the primitive life of his people. In that story, Resnick emphasized the ambiguity of the achievements of "progress" by presenting us a basically sympathetic viewpoint character whose actions are immoral by modern western standards. "For I Have Touched the Sky" tries to continue in the same direction, but is much less ambiguous, hence less effective. The story concerns Koriba's refusal of knowledge to a brilliant young girl in Kirimaya, which results in her suicide, and makes Koriba lament (!) "the cost of his wisdom." It'll probably make most readers reject his "wisdom" outright.

Gregory Benford's "Alpha" is a section from *Tides of Light*, curiously reworked so that it stands independently. It is mostly a standard physics problem about something dropped into a hole through a planet; I thought it worked okay in the novel, but found it pretty lame as a stand-alone. It has nice Benford touches (notably the incomprehensible aliens), but it is nothing special.

"At the Risk" is Connie Willis in her comedy mode (*à la* "Blued Moon," "Spice Pogrom," and "Time Out"). It is also a repeat of the basic method she used in "Swarzchild Radius": take a scientific concept as a metaphor for a "real-life" situation. The result is a bravura performance. In this case, she connects quantum mechanics to the uncertainties of a physicists' convention in a Hollywood hotel. The result is (I think) not as, but is fun to read; in all, it doesn't work as well as I would expect from this author, maybe because her picture of what quantum physicists would discuss is less than convincing (as is the Hollywood-quantum physics convention).

In any collection such as this, a reader will find stories to which he reacts in a lukewarm way; they are competent (else they wouldn't be here), but they don't seem notable. This may be due to the reader's own blind spots. Thus, I'll just say that Kathie Kojia's "Skin Deep," William King's "Visiting the Dead," and Robert Sampson's "Relationships" strike me this way, and go on.

There is an important (and living) tradition, in the sf field, of adventure stories in *sf*. These are best when their world-building is consistent and innovative, and when their plots are rational and engrossing. Such stories do not usually attempt deep examinations of their themes or their characters, but rather show them to us in their actions. When well done, these stories are among the best the field has to offer. Two stories (at least) in this book seem to fit this description: Steve Popkes's "The Egg" and Janet Kagan's "The Loch Moose Monster." They are both very well done, but I am especially fond of "Loch Moose," perhaps because the characters are so pleasant.

Robert Silverberg has two stories here. "Takes from the Venis

Woods" presupposes an alternate history in which the Roman Empire did not fall (apparently because there was no Christian religion, which I find a surprising connection). The milieu is quite well drawn, but there is very little story here. "Enter a Soldier. Later: Enter Another" is also concerned with history, via the idea of recreating people from the past as intelligent computer programs. The interest here arises from the choice of protagonists (Pizarro and Socrates) and their interaction. However, once they are both there in an indistinguishable way, the story peters out and stops.

"Dori Bangs," by Bruce Sterling, is a show-stopper. It is a very strange story, in many ways, since Sterling here is attempting something unique: part story, part lament, part essay. He gives us Lester Bangs and Don Seda as they might have been, lets the dream run its course and (inevitably, he suggests) turn sour, and then asks us whether this would not still be better than two rather pointless early deaths. One is reminded of Unamuno's "tragic sense of life," and is returned to basic existential questions. This has my vote as one of the five best stories in the book.

Lucius Shepard's "The Ends of the Earth," on the other hand, strikes me as close to self-plagiarism. This is Shepard doing his usual stuff: Central American locale, local magic, dark and moody narration. The writing is as good as ever, but there seems to be nothing really new here. By contrast, "The Price of Oranges," by Nancy Kress (which immediately follows the Shepard in the book) is a real gem: a bittersweet evocation of history and the changes it implies which cuts to the bone and does its work most effectively. The author remains one of sf's most interesting in short form (though I don't think either of her last two novels really "works").

S. P. Somtow's "Lottery Night" is also, in a way, more of the same: Somtow ransacks his Thai heritage for a funny/scary story. It works, but it makes me wonder how people from Thailand would react to this. (It's true, of course, that at some level he also makes fun of Western prejudices.) Another "more of the same" story is Avram Davidson's "The Odd Old Bird," a Dr. Ezerzhazy story told with the usual flair, but with a rather predictable ending.

"A Deeper Sea," by Alexander Jablokov, strikes me as two stories mixed together. The first, told mostly in flashbacks, is quite fascinating: it tells the story of how communication with dolphins and cetaceans was established, and of what follows. The second, about the space exploration project of which the cetaceans are part, is rather more fuzzy, and seems to be there only to provide the main character an easy way out at the end.

"The Edge of the World," by Michael Swanwick, is another "nifty idea" story, which gives us a fascinating portrayal of a world which doesn't have an end (in the most physical sense). This impressive setting isn't due for anything much, unfortunately: the story about having your wishes come true and learning to regret it is just too old to work. Doszoi has juxtaposed this with Megan Lindholm's "Silver Lady and the Fortyish Man," which is in some sense precisely the opposite. One starts out sure that "Silver Lady" is a "magic intruder on everyday life" story, and it is, but it has several fascinating twists to it: the magic is quite trivial, and in fact may be wholly illusory, but its impact is quite real. All in all, the result is a very effective story.

Every once in a while, a really odd idea works out really well. Alan Brennert's "The Third Sex" clearly reflects the current fascination with androgyny, but does so in a rather more interesting way than usual, by postulating a third gender. One might ask whether the impact of being neither sex in a society such as ours wouldn't be much deeper than what he describes, and one would probably say that the ending is a little too pat, but the story is nevertheless memorable. One might say the same about "Winter on the Belle Poudre," by Neal Barrett, Jr., which puts Emily Dickinson in a woodsman's cabin in the middle of nowhere in the middle of winter, and makes something of it. The something includes a bit of literary blasphemy, which makes it all the more fun.

The final three stories are all very good. In "Just Another Perfect Day," John Varley gives us a variation on Gene Wolfe's "Soldier" books, using a character with only short-term memory in a very different way, and adding in some very interesting inscrutable aliens. He has chosen to tell his story in a way that allows him to keep the future mysterious, to good effect. Brian Stableford gives us "The Magic Bullet," imagining a possible result of genetic engineering that is quite chilling, and embed-

ding it into a story that works quite well. The way the situation and its revelations are handled is essential in making this story work; from that point of view, the story is extremely well done. The only possible caveat would be the ambiguity of the ending: the main character seems to know what the denouement will be, but this reader, at least, was far from sure . . . which may be the point! [Perhaps the two final paragraphs, which were dropped from the text of this volume, would have clarified the ending further.—eds.]

To conclude, we get John Crowley's "Great Work of Time," from his recent collection (and why no magazine published this is beyond me). This is (another!) alternate-world story, in the multiple-timelines vein, but it is exceptionally well done. Crowley portrays a secret society dedicated to altering the time lines so as to preserve and strengthen the British Empire. He manages to make us sympathetic to the society, and then pulls the rug from under us by revealing the essential (unconscious) motivation behind their actions as a love of stagnation, a desire

for the halting of all change. It is an engrossing story and a serious one at the same time, and it is a happy reminder that even such old sfideas as parallel time-streams and the dangers of time travel can still be used in effective ways.

The best five I'd say: "Don't Bangs," "The Price of Oranges," "The Loch Moose Monster," "Great Work of Time," and "Tiny Tango." And are there any 1989 stories that really should have been here? I'm sure every reader will have her own list of those: Suzy McKee Curner's "Boobs," for example, or Allen M. Steele's "John Harper Wilson," or Gene Wolfe's "How the Bishop Sailed to Inniskillen," or Connie Willis's "Time Out," or Judith Moffett's "Not Without Honor" . . . The list could go on for quite a while: sf in short form is (thank goodness!) alive and well. ▶

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The 1990 Annual World's Best SF edited by

Donald A. Wollheim and Arthur W. Saha

New York: DAW Books, 1990; \$4.50; 341 pages

reviewed by Leonard Rysdyk

At first glance, Donald Wollheim's *The 1990 Annual World's Best SF* looks like a fairly conservative anthology. Only British and American writers appear and they are pretty well-known ones at that. Moreover, the stories appear to be of the classic "problem-solving" kind. Rather than merely choosing clever tales with neat solutions, however, Mr. Wollheim has found many stories in which the solution to the problem in the plot leads only to a greater problem which continues beyond the scope of the story. In fact, this anthology is much less conservative than it appears.

The strength of this anthology is evident in the book's second story, Brian Stableford's "The Magic Bullet," a murder mystery set in the Applied Genetics Department. When a seemingly insignificant researcher is shot, the Ministry of Defense wants to know what, after years of futility, he has discovered. The answer is brought to light that he has developed a method for making women—just women—immortal. The exclusivity of this discovery is itself a new problem. A classic problem-solving story would end with some sort of cover-up, some pulp loss of data in a maze of floppy disks that leaves the reader wondering if the vital information will ever be found. Instead, Stableford tells us through the Ministry attempts to control the information, a research assistant distributes it widely. The last sentence ends, ". . . and the world was embarked on its new era." The reader is not left wondering about a mere plot detail, but about what the world means when sex and death, the two greatest problems of humankind, have been fundamentally altered. The effect is troubling and awe-inspiring.

Equally powerful is J. G. Ballard's "War Fever," the last piece in the book. It is set in the Beirut of the future which is exactly like the Beirut of the present: an armed camp contained and monitored by United Nations forces. One young militant decides to resolve the conflict. He inspires the warring factions join the UN peacekeeping forces and direct their attention to keeping the peace. Suddenly, he finds himself banished from the conflict. He learns that Beirut is being kept as a breeding ground for the "disease" of war and that he and his fellow militants are the "rats in a war laboratory" the UN is studying while the rest of the world remains immune from war as it is from smallpox. Denouement, finish—right? Wrong. The young soldier decides to break free of the quarantine area and re-infect the world with the disease of war. Another solution that only begets another problem. In effect, Ballard has written an anti-problem-solving story. The universe he describes is one in which there are no solutions, which is the true state of the human condition.

Sometimes, however, the problem that comes of the solution is unconvincing, as is the case of Lucius Shepard's "Surrender." In a backward village in Guatemala, two reporters discover that the local strongman has developed a crop which will make the campesinos perfect, at least from the strongman's point of view. What we have here is simply a twist on the idea of creating zombies. Unfortunately, the

story is stronger on symbolism than on science (or even inventiveness) and the message, that totalitarianism is bad, is underwhelming. Unlike most of the other stories in the anthology, Shepard's story really ends when its problem is solved (the strongman is killed) and the protagonists merely go off to live in the American wilderness with guilty consciences.

The first story in the book, Gregory Benford's "Alphas," is also a little too neat. It is primarily a physics problem, though a wonderfully inventive and clever one. It is disappointing in that its most interesting implications are dodged. Aliens appear and, using a cosmic string, cut a tunnel through Venus like a baker coring an apple. Why? Neither they nor Benford say. The aliens do not want humans to approach. Why? Not a clue. When a human approaches, they attempt to execute him by tossing him into the core-tunnel (that was the clever part), but when he escapes, they let him go home. Why? Actually, the Alphas answer that one: "Because he displayed (untranslatable) and proved himself (untranslatable)." Okay, a problem begot by a solution, but this one is either unsolvable or too solvable—replace the parentheses with "cleverness" and "brave" and presto, you're speaking Alpha Centaurian.

The three stories by James Morrow, Judith Moffett and Lisa Tuttle are captivating primarily for their charm. They are beautifully realized in terms of character and description, but their problems have some problems. Morrow's "Abe Lincoln in McDonald's" begins, "He caught the train out of 1863 and got off at the blustery December of 2009, not far from Christmas, where he walked well past the turn of the decade and without glancing back, settled down in the fifth of July for a good look around." What Lincoln is looking for is an answer to the question of whether or not to sign the Seward Treaty which would end the Civil War by legalizing slavery. It seems he already has, however, as he witnesses legal slavery everywhere he goes. How did that happen? Indeed, why must Mr. Lincoln ponder any decision if he has a time machine that will let him test out his choices? These are questions the story does not address. Lisa Tuttle's "In Translation" is a very serious, mature and humane story, though it too dodges its big questions. When aliens come to Earth, some humans are able to translate for them, but some are merely drawn to them and are taken in to the alien compound. We never find out why or what the aliens want of their guests. We tend to settle for the observation that humans appear to be as alien to one another as the off-worlders are to us earthlings. The success of this story is that Ms. Tuttle makes that observation powerful and convincing. Judith Moffett's "Not Without Honor" is equally low-key, but not quite as convincing. It is a tribute to the Mickey Mouse Club and its spiritual leader, Jimmy. Aliens are having trouble with their rebellious youth and, having picked up early TV transmissions, come to Earth to bring Jimmy back to solve their problems. The characters who first contact the aliens are concerned that the aliens have unrealistic expectations. Jimmy is dead and they are doubtful that his simplistic message

of niceness would really solve the aliens' problems anyway. The earthmen are scared. Among them, however, is an older woman, facing retirement, who was a fan of the Mickey Mouse Club in her youth. Slowly, she convinces first herself, then the others, of the validity of Jimmy's message. In so doing, she inspires the aliens to ask her to come with them in Jimmy's place. This solves the story's problem, but how do we readers feel about it? Normally, it would be hard to get Jimmy's saccharine credo across to anyone not wearing his mouse-ears, but Ms. Moffett's story is so full of belief in the power of good that we come to believe in it as do the characters. The real triumph is for the protagonist herself. Instead of retiring, as she had planned, the protagonist takes on a new challenge and is invigorated by it. So are we.

Four of the strongest stories deal primarily with very human issues. In *Barrington J. Bayley's "Death Ship"* a father worries that he has failed his son by not bequeathing the right genetic material to make the son smart enough. His feelings of inadequacy force him to grandstand as a test pilot on a time machine. The machine fails and so does he. He feels himself cut off from his family and from himself. Neither the scientific nor the domestic problems are solved but the inner conflict is compelling. Brian Aldiss's "North of the Abyss" begins with a solution of the most unsatisfactory kind: a man murders his wife. The killing occurs in a tourist hotel near a holy place of the ancient Egyptians. The man wanders at night through the ancient temples and sees Anubis and the gods of the underworld. But they do not solve his problem. They do not convince him to repent nor do they turn back the clock to undo his actions. They remind him of the finality and inevitability of death. Though the protagonist is not caught, his problem persists: he is plagued by guilt and his own knowledge of the truth. Brian Aldiss has long been a proponent of problem-posing stories. The supernatural elements of his story serve to emphasize the real problem of the character's life—his life itself before and after his crime.

Robert Silverberg has two pieces in the collection. One is "A Sleep and a Forgetting" about changing history by diverting the path of the Mongol invasion. Unfortunately, it is the history of another reality, and the problems are solved so neatly the story has only passing effect. In

many ways, this is the neatest, purest, most conservative choice in the anthology and, though slick and fascinating—it is a real treasure trove of history and linguistics trivia—it is not the best. Far more interesting is "Chirprunner," about a psychiatrist treating an adolescent boy for anorexia. This patient wants to lose his body and enter his dreams where he moves through the micro-world inside his computer, in which he "runs down the corridors of the chips, with electrons whizzing by." The story is so effective because the patient withers right before the analyst's eyes. The psychiatrist is the problem solver, but his rationality collides directly with his patient's emotions. What is worse, the psychiatrist admits to having similar dreams. Problem-solving itself becomes a problem.

Silverberg's characters are well drawn; their inner conflicts are brought out as they test one another in dialogue. The same can be said of Orson Scott Card's "Dogwalker," a story not so much about computer crime as computer criminals. The narrator, one of whose names is Good Boy, is a thirty-year old man stuck in the nine-year old body of the child he was when he was killed and brought back to life. He describes himself as a "vertical" thinker, but this just comes down to a talent (a "knack" I guess, like the characters in Card's "Alvin Maker" series) for guessing passwords. His partner is Dogwalker, a streetwise opportunist. They reach for their piece of the pie with charming desperation. When they commit their crime and are caught, the problem facing the narrator is not how to take something from someone but to give. He is forced to learn humanity.

The cover of *The 1990 Annual World's Best SF*, depicting bubble-domed carslevitating through a city of swooping steel curves, looks like something from the Golden Age. It looks like it is going to give us what we want: good, old science fiction. But the conservatism is only a ploy. In fact, this book is much more. The stories turn the old problem-solving formula on its head. They have scope and power. They give us much more than we expect. And isn't that what we really wanted?

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Kerem S. Bilg  Clifford Simak's Journey

When his books are considered as a whole, the late Clifford D. Simak, Nebula Grand Master, can be said to have been on a journey to find the truth about human nature. On this journey, he moved between two philosophical perspectives which could be described as secular forms of Augustinianism and Pelagianism, beginning with strongly Augustinian views, shifting to more Pelagian ones, and eventually fringing a synthesis of the two.

Although Augustinianism and Pelagianism are something less than household words, they will seem instantly familiar once explained, as they have profoundly influenced Western thought. Saint Augustine had a seminal influence both on early Christianity and on philosophy in general. Augustine reaffirmed the traditional Christian doctrine of original sin. Human beings are considered to be inherently sinful and flawed from birth to death, regardless of their individual actions. It is impossible for men and women to transcend their sin and become "good" through their own efforts: salvation can only come through God's grace. God is the only agent of salvation.

Pelagius, also called Morgan, was a British monk who spoke out against this doctrine. Pelagius denied original sin and stated that men had the capability to achieve salvation through their own efforts. Men were not inherently sinful—they were morally neutral, but they had the ability to make the correct choices to live the good life. Man could save himself. Pelagius was condemned by Augustine and declared a heretic by the Council of Ephesus in AD 431.

It would behoove us to remember, before growing too excited over the picture of a free will-determinism debate, that Augustine and Pelagius probably did not consider their differing conceptions of human nature to be the center of their differing philosophies. They were primarily concerned with defining the role of God in human affairs, with Augustine ascribing a greater role to God than Pelagius did.

His arguments can be used in a secular manner, however, to describe differing concepts of human nature. Witness the Constitution of the United States. It separates the powers of government into different branches because no one man or group of men can be trusted to hold absolute power. This is an Augustinian viewpoint. Faith in progress and technology, by contrast, are Pelagian. The grand poverty-fighting programs of the 1930s and the 1960s were Pelagian in their faith that poverty, crime and unhappiness could be eradicated by human effort. Both viewpoints sound reasonable, and our society tends to move in a cycle between the two.

In his early days, Simak's perspective was an extremely pessimistic Augustinianism. He moved away from this perspective steadily over the years, even to the point where he implied that there was an inherent good in human beings. Finally, he espoused a synthesis of the two philosophies: beings were "sinful" but there were some special people who could transcend that sin and build a society for the good.

City (1952) is perhaps Simak's most famous book. It is a collection of short stories from the 1940s that describe the passing of humanity from the Earth. The stories are presented as folk tales told by the Dogs, intelligent canines who have established a gentle, nonviolent civilization. *City* is heavily Augustinian in its depiction of human nature. Humanity is presented as being an inherently violent and sinful species. What makes the tales tragic is that the humans are aware of their own flaws but cannot overcome them.

In the first story, a city in the Midwest dies as society is decentralized by fast transportation and the opening up of the countryside when farming moves to the sea. The implication is that humanity will build a better life outside the cities. But, as is discovered two hundred years later, Humanity is still a prisoner of its own inherent faults: people experience acute agoraphobia in the countryside. Changing

Humanity's environment failed to change Humanity. Humanity does wrong because it is in our nature to do wrong, as Augustine contended. Surgeon Jeremie Webster suffers so badly from agoraphobia that he cannot travel to Mars to treat the dying philosopher who holds the secret to advancing humanity "a thousand years in two generations"—his robot butler Jenkins prevents him from leaving, concerned for his health. The pursuit of this philosopher's idea is typical of human actions. The philosophy is not desired for the insight it would bring but for the power it would bring.

Almost a thousand years after the philosophy (named for its creator, Juwain) is lost, humanity makes an amazing discovery. Men explore Jupiter by changing themselves into Lopers, giant creatures native to the planet. None return, because life as a Loper is much better than life as a human. Unfettered by humanity's congenital flaws and violence, men-as-Lopers can truly live and achieve. Kent Fowler returns from Jupiter to tell all. Tyler Webster, Chairman of the World Committee, is afraid that if Fowler can make himself understood, people will all rush to Jupiter to become Lopers and the human race will end. Just as Augustine believed that our congenial sin would not vanish until the outside force of God's grace transformed us, the humans of City cannot lose their sin until the outside force of Jupiter transforms them.

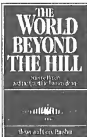
Webster points out that humans have begun to make great achievements. For 125 years no man has killed another. Webster even refuses to kill Fowler, though humanity hangs in the balance, not wanting to throw away that achievement. But this achievement is denigrated by the Doggish narrators of the tales and called "the true measure of this [Man's] savagery... after a million years he has rid himself of killing and he regards it as a great accomplishment..." As the tales have demonstrated, evil (such as killing) is so basic to the human race that if it is done away with, humanity is no longer human. In a sense, Webster and Fowler are both arguing for the end of humanity—Fowler's method is simply more drastic and, considering humanity's record of failure, more likely to succeed.

Fowler's cause is aided by the efforts of the mutants. There have always been mutants in human society, those with greater mental capabilities. When society broke up, the mutants took to the hills and developed a strange culture of their own. They are supermen: smarter, stronger, longer-lived—and more evil, without even a hint of sympathy. Man's sin is one with the mold; it cannot be outgrown. The mutants figured out the Juwain philosophy long ago: it allows a person to completely understand the viewpoint of another. The mutants release it now as a final stab against the rest of humanity: Fowler is understood, and all men flock to Jupiter. By the year 4000, Earth is largely deserted, but for a few humans in Geneva. Jenkins, family robot of the Websters for 2000 years, now helps guide the Dogs on the path to their own civilization (Dogs were created by Bruce Webster in the 23rd century, in the hope that they would help Man break out of his eternal, self-defeating "groove of logic").

Jon Webster returns to Webster house from Geneva and meets Jenkins, who asks him to stay and provide leadership. But Webster, a historian, has learned the Augustinian truth that humanity cannot be trusted, and so he returns to Geneva and shuts the city off from the world with a force-field dome. This will prevent humanity from getting out and messing up things for the Dogs, as they inevitably would. Should humanity prove to be smart enough to open the forcefield, they will have earned the right to leave. Webster then enters cryonic suspension forever, to make his decision irrevocable. In this act there is a hint of Pelagianism—humans might be able to improve themselves—but this is within the context of being fairly sure that they won't, an Augustinian maxim.

Some humans are left outside Geneva. Jenkins takes them in but is unable to make them unlearn killing and hatred: innocently, they rediscover it for themselves. They reinvent the bow and arrow, and an invader from another dimension is driven away in terror when it senses the sheer aggressive ferocity of the human mind ready to kill. All this is done unconsciously, by instinct. This underscores the Augustinian point made in the first tale: the Pelagian act of transforming the environment to alter human behavior does not work because the fault is within the human. Jenkins transports these humans to another, alternate Earth to live, and is saddened. Humans cannot correct their own flaws, nor can Jenkins, a robot and thus an extension of Humanity, do so.

Webster is briefly revived five thousand years later by Jenkins. The Earth is slowly being covered by a gigantic building built by Ants, normal ants given intelligence as a joke by the mutants, who have left for other worlds. Jenkins asks Webster's advice, and Webster tells him to kill the Ants. Jenkins returns him to sleep, and resigns himself to losing to the Ants, because it is "better that one should lose a world than



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go back to killing." All but Jenkins abandon the Earth, but by the year 24000 all the Ants are dead: created by a Superman, they were a caricature of Man, and they run into a similar dead end and suffer extinction as well. A starship of robots comes to Earth and asks Jenkins to join them, and reluctantly, he does, leaving the Earth deserted.

Here in *City* is the pessimistic, secular Augustine for all to see. Man is unredeemable by whatever he does—whether he leaves cities or abolishes killing, he is still evil. Even starting from scratch he will develop violence and hate. Like Augustine's concept of God's grace, redemption comes only from outside sources: from Mars and Jupiter. On his own, Man is invariably doomed and cannot redeem himself. Over the next decade or so, Simak's philosophy underwent a change and this viewpoint became less harsh.

In 1963, Simak published *Way Station*, the story of ageless Civil War veteran Enoch Wallace who operates the secret matter-transmitter station on Earth that aliens use as a relay station on their way elsewhere, and a story that is largely Pelagian. Human beings—and intelligences in general—are still basically evil and violent, as per Augustinian doctrine. Their violence can be controlled, however: the galaxy keeps itself on the "plane of principles and ethics" by use of the Talisman, a mystical device, handled by a telepath, that travels from world to world, reminding intelligent beings of their brotherhood. This relates to the Augustinian concept of grace, but is Pelagian in the sense that a worthy person is needed to operate the Talisman.

There is the danger, during the story, that the Way Station will be shut down, and the Earth turned back to an earlier, non-technological era by a galaxy concerned about the growing drift to war on the planet. Wallace would then be forced to choose between Earth and the Galaxy. He has valuable ledgers in which he has written everything he has learned about the aliens as they passed through his care. Wallace decides to give this knowledge to Earth if the Way Station is shut down. Wallace does not think this knowledge will be abused, as Augustine might suspect, but holds the Pelagian attitude that it can be used to help Humanity improve.

In the end, the problem is solved in a Pelagian manner. The Talisman is stolen, throwing the galaxy into crisis, and the thief flees to Earth. Wallace and other Earthmen apprehend him, and the Talisman falls into the hands of the deaf-mute Lucy, who instantly proves a better operator/host than had been seen in years. She brings peace to the galaxy, and also to the Earth, using the Talisman to dampen the natural violence inherent in intelligences. Wallace goes forth to educate the Earth about the galaxy to prepare them for eventual membership in the "cofraternity" of intelligence. These are Pelagian concepts: it is possible for men and women—indeed, all intelligences—to transcend their inherently violent nature (which doomed them in *City*) and choose the good life.

There is an important point. Although all human beings are inherently evil, they do not all transcend their evil. There are unlovely humans in the story as well as unlovely aliens. What is needed is for a *small group* of people (similar, perhaps, to Arnold Toynbee's concept of the "creative minority") to renounce the evil, and then for them to lead the rest of their species into the good life. This is accomplished for the galaxy (and later for Earth) by the telepaths who control the Talisman, and for the Earth by Enoch Wallace, educated by forces outside the human race. Although similar to Augustine's concept of grace, it is Pelagian in the sense that they must take an affirmative action.

In a sense, Wallace is correct in his feelings that he has lost his humanity, or rather, what that word used to signify. Human beings must leave behind their old world of violence for a new world. Old ways of thinking and acting must change. The Pelagian current in Simak's thinking allows humanity to renounce its inherent evil without, as in *City*, having to go to Jupiter and renounce its humanity. It is possible to change for the better.

No Talisman is needed in *All Flesh is Grass*, written by Simak in 1965. In this story, the Midwestern town of Millville is suddenly sealed off from the rest of the world by an impenetrable, invisible dome. Brad Carter manages to slip through a dimensional gate and meet the aliens responsible, who take the form of purple flowers. They offer humanity the secrets of the universe. But what do the aliens want in return?

Carter discovers that they want something inherent to humans,

something utterly easy to give. They want love, to be admired for their beauty which they did not even know they possessed until they came to Earth. This goes beyond Augustinianism, which argues that humans are predisposed to evil. This almost goes beyond Pelagianism, which argues that human beings are morally neutral but can choose good. Here, human beings are presented as having inherent goodness, in their appreciation of beauty! Human beings do not realize this until the flowers come, but once they do it is implied that a better society, truer to this aspect of human nature, can be built. This is an extremely Pelagian concept, to say the least. No Augustinian Talisman is needed here—humanity can save itself all on its own, just by being itself.

Simak began to move away from this viewpoint and brought a greater element of Augustinianism back in, as seen in his *Why Call Them Back From Heaven?* (1967). The same concept of a change in human society is present, but its portrayal of human nature is darker. This book tells the story of Forever Center, which promises eternal life to all humanity. In the year 2148, people give all their money to the Center, sealed in high interest bank accounts, and are frozen in cryonic suspension. When Forever Center discovers the cure for death, they will be revived and live on the uninhabited Earth of the past or an alternate world (this is needed to alleviate population pressure).

Forever Center, however, is not Paradise. It is smug, complacent and occasionally repressive. Human beings, with their inherent wrongs, are attempting to prolong something that should not be prolonged. What is found at the end of the book is that death cannot be conquered, because there actually is an afterlife. Once again, Man has applied his technical genius to the wrong problem. At the end of the book, an ascetic hermit who has lost his traditional faith asserts "God has turned His back on us." The truth is, humanity has turned its backs on God. Man's flaws defeat him—a point central to Augustine.

There is a modicum of hope. As Frost, the hero, realizes, the truth will get out soon enough and once again humans will have "the agony of conscience." *Why Call Them Back From Heaven?* although it is more pessimistic than *All Flesh is Grass*, might be considered a *City* in reverse, because this time it is implied that human beings will correct their wrongs, again a hint of Pelagius in that we can transcend our (inherited) evil, once the problem is identified, and still be human. In *City*, with its stronger Augustinianism, this was impossible.

Simak's *Shakespeare's Planet* (1976) is a similar synthesis of Augustinianism and Pelagianism. The story tells of Astronaut Carter Horton, who left Earth on a starship governed by three disembodied brains: a scientist, a grande dame and a monk, who work in tandem to give the ship a superbrain, which Horton can talk with through a skull implant. The ship lands on a dreary planet, where Nicodemus, the onboard robot, and Horton discover a creature called Carnivore, who travels the galaxy killing for sport. Carnivore came to the planet via a dimensional tunnel that is now closed, as did a man named Shakespeare, so called because of the volume of Shakespeare he carried. Trapped on the planet, Shakespeare died when his cancer inhibitor ran out.

This book endorses the Augustinian view, but very softly. Its prime target is the technological/consumer mentality, Man's persistent chasing after things. Horton wonders at the futility of it all: his mission was to seek out new planets for colonization, but it has taken the ship so long to reach the stars that any answer they find would no longer be relevant to human society. Elaine, a member of the group trying to map the tunnels, arrives on the planet and tells Horton of the collapse of human society. Humanity is rootless and wandering aimlessly. Horton has lost his friends and his world. The three brains of the ship have lost not only that but their very bodies. Arrogance is again the culprit: the three brains must face the fact that they joined the mission for personal ends, not altruism. Nicodemus is aboard as a replacement for another robot, removed for being smug and arrogant.

The theme of Man as a lost creature exists throughout the book, magnified by the presence of the "god-hour," that time each day when all feel as though their very souls are laid bare for inspection. It later turns out to be simply the telepathic signals between Pond, a water creature that lives as a pond on the planet, and its fellow ponds on other planets that compose one vast life-form. Nevertheless, it forces honesty: the savage and arrogant nature of humanity is understood. The futility of most of its efforts is understood. Faults are recognized. But what comes next?

That question is answered in Simak's last three books: *Project Pope* (1981), *Special Deliverance* (1982) and *Highway of Eternity* (1986). Here, Simak presents a synthesis of the two philosophies, with Pelagius as the senior partner. The two contending philosophies form the heart of the books.

Project Pope depicts a largely Pelagian society. Dr. Jason Tennyson is fleeing for his life from the feudal planet Gushot. He hops a freighter bound for the planet End of Nothing. Aboard ship, he meets a beautiful journalist who tells him about the planet. It is the home of a religious cult known as Vatican-17, run by robots who wear clothing and have a hierarchy similar to the Catholic Church.

In actuality, Vatican-17 is a dynamic research project that has been active for nearly a thousand years. Robots wanting to become more human, have attempted to found a religion. To truly understand God, however, they feel it is necessary to understand the universe. Therefore, they have gathered a multitude of human "Listeners," who send their minds roving through time and space, gathering information. The information is then fed into a gigantic computer: the Pope.

Two conflicts exist in the book. The first is an internal one at Vatican-17. One of the listeners dares to have discovered Heaven itself on her voyage. She becomes arrogant and convinced that she has reached the state of "grace." This sparks a conflict within Vatican-17 between those who believe that knowledge must precede faith and those who believe that faith can exist independent of knowledge.

The second conflict finishes off the first one. It seems that what the Listener saw as Heaven is in actuality another research center much like Vatican-17: the Center for Galactic Studies. The crucial difference is that while Vatican-17 seeks knowledge to understand God and thus how we should behave, Center seeks knowledge in order to gain power and dominate others. Elements of Center attempt to subjugate Vatican-17 but the Pope proves stronger, harmony is restored, and Vatican-17 resumes its mission. Tennyson and the journalist, Jill Roberts, join Vatican-17 in the course of the novel, and become lovers.

Project Pope is, in a sense, the end of Clifford Simak's journey, *Special Deliverance* and *Highway of Eternity* being the perfection of previously tested ground. Augustinianism is present in the book, in the Listener Mary's self-destructive arrogance. Center encapsulates everything that is wrong with intelligences in its lust for power. It is the Augustinian version of Vatican-17.

This is counterbalanced by several positive factors. The institution of Vatican-17 lives in harmony with the planet's environment. There is also an entire race, called the Dusters, native to the planet, whose "task was to know the universe." Arrogance exists, but so does a sincere desire to find the truth. The people are kind and likable. This is truly Pelagian in that no outside entity such as Horsface was required even to begin the process. Robots (an extension of human beings) began it, inspired by the nonuniversal, human concept of religion. In Pelagian fashion, people are not doomed by their sins but can transcend them.

Simak's Augustinianism has shrunk to the simple statement that intelligence brings with it arrogance. We therefore must strive to remember why we are doing things and to make sure that we do things for good purposes. It is a Pelagian philosophy of human nature that assumes we can. Knowledge-gathering as an end in itself is meaningless: knowledge must not be used as an instrument of hate (though this is what occurs often). It may even be that some people are naturally good, and thus would use knowledge for good purposes. Salvation does not come from outside, as Augustine argued, but from human beings themselves. Goodness can exist in the universe, and men can even bring good into it, if they are so inclined. What is required is the opposite of hate—love.

One scene in *Project Pope* neatly encapsulates this view. Jason Tennyson, with the aid of one of the dusters, is transported to a world a Listener visited some time ago: a place inhabited by large cubes who communicate by flashing equations across their faces. Jason arrives and is unable to communicate. The cubes surround him and collapse on him, passing equations through his body and then returning him home.

He returns suddenly to his apartment, and Jill comes in, wondering where he has been. They embrace, and Jason caresses her scarred cheek as he often does. When he takes away his hand, the

scar is gone. The equation people, sensing that Jason was a physician, gave him the one-time power as a gift. Man uses knowledge as a tool of love, not as something to gain power. This is far and away from City, where an extradimensional invader was frightened away by waves of hate from a human being.

Special Deliverance is set in contemporary times. The human race has failed on countless alternate Earths—an extremely Augustinian view of human nature. Altruistic, skull-faced aliens have decided to try and save humanity by selecting the fittest specimens from among the various alternate Earths and settling them on a new world. The selection process involves placing the candidates (who are ignorant of the entire process) of differing worlds together on an Earth where humanity began millions of years earlier and destroyed itself through its own technological folly and arrogance—an Augustinian vision. If they can identify and solve the puzzle of how to escape, they are deemed worthy of selection.

Edward Lansing, an English professor at Langmore College in New England, is teleported to the testing ground on the alternate Earth. There he meets with his group. The group's numbers are reduced as they explore a long-dead city and landscape of fantastic machines and artifacts. Lansing eventually finds the solution to the puzzle along with Mary, a woman from an alternate world where the great empires of the eighteenth century endured to modern times. The solution is something extremely obvious that the group overlooked, obsessed as they were by the city (again, humanity's preoccupation with the wrong goals). Edward and Mary persevere because of their love for one another. This is noted by the aliens, four skeleton-like creatures who appeared on the planet several times playing cards, when Edward and Mary finally confront them. They are then sent to the new planet to help in the building of the new civilization and "hand in hand they walked to mankind's second chance."

In this book, Pelagius is still the senior partner but he is not as strong as he was in *Project Pope*. Humanity is here rescued from its flaws by an outside agent, as Augustine would have it. But humans, not the outside agent, must not only understand human failure, but also be able to take action to correct their flaws. Otherwise, the skull-faced aliens would have selected not Lansing, but his talkative fellow professor Andy Spaulding, who ruminates over human failure far more eloquently than Lansing ever does.

A similar world-view is expressed in Simak's last book, *Highway of Eternity*. The two principal characters in the story are Tom Boone, who is able to teleport into a limbo-like space when threatened, and his friend Jay Corcoran, who can see things other humans can't. Looking for a vanished client of Corcoran's, the two get mixed up with a family of humans fleeing from the year AD 1,000,000.

In that distant time, the human race is willingly sacrificing its bodies to become creatures of pure thought, a process performed by aliens called Infinites. This large human family of reclusive throwbacks refused to submit, and fled to hide at Hopkins Acre, an isolated site in England in the year 1745. Corcoran and Boone unwittingly lead the Infinites to the family, and all scatter to the four winds to avoid capture, which occupies the majority of the book.

In the end, the Infinites are defeated, and Boone falls in love with Enid, a girl in the family. This is all to the pleasure of the alien Horsface, who appears several times in the book. Horsface is aware of the sorry record of intelligence in the universe: it usually destroys itself through its own arrogance, as the human race does by becoming incorporeal. As in *Special Deliverance*, this Augustinian view is counterbalanced by Horsface's Pelagian hope that by bringing exceptional humans (such as Enid and Boone) together, a new human race can be created that will prosper and thrive.

This is essentially a larger and more cosmic version of *Special Deliverance* and was the last book Simak wrote. Once more, our sins are congenial, as Augustine said, but there exist exceptional individuals who can lift our society above them, as Pelagius said.

An essential Augustinian element remains, however, in that the impetus for the whole process of salvation (or deliverance) must come from outside. Horsface or the skull-faced aliens of *Special Deliverance* have to begin the process. They consider themselves to be helping evolution along, removing some of the random chance element. A Pelagian element remains as well, because the process depends upon the ability of the selected humans and the choices they make. Intelligent life

to the human type is seen as a very tricky thing, because it tends to be destroyed by its flaws, as Augustine pointed out. Horseface as well as the skeleton-men list several races that failed, who could not rise, Pelagius-fashion, above their flaws. In *Highway of Eternity* intelligent trees inherit the Earth—by virtue of their very structure as well as their life span they will be more deliberate and make the right choices more often. Intelligent life of the human type can succeed, however, if it is led from the temptations posed by its own faults into a just society, either (Augustine-fashion) by an outside agency or (Pelagius-fashion) by the actions of its members.

And so Clifford D. Simak, Nebula Grand Master, completed his journey. But his progress was not linear. He would be strongly

Augustinian in one book, move to Pelagianism, and eventually end with a synthesis of the two. This is not unusual—we cycle between the two viewpoints of human nature all the time, being Pelagian when we succeed and accomplish our goals, Augustinian when we fail and behave badly. Clifford Simak's journey was, and is, our journey, the journey down the road of self-discovery. His books act as signposts along the way. ▶

Kerem S. Bilgi lives in Los Angeles, California. He would like to thank the staff of Dangerous Visions in Sherman Oaks, California, the Reverend D. Stuart Dunnington, and the Reverend Christopher K. Eade for their time and assistance.

Popular Gastroenterology *My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist* by Mark Leyner

New York: Harmony, 1990; \$7.95 tp; 154 pages

reviewed by John J. Ordover

This book certainly doesn't suffer from lack of critical attention; both *The New York Times* and *The Village Voice* have given significant space to it. Both papers, however, devoted more of that space to discussing how nice it was to see a book of this type, that is, strange and off-center, get published nowadays and how important that was rather than discussing the book itself. The impression left, especially by the *Voice*, is that *My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist* is an esoteric work with only limited appeal. In fact it is accessible, entertaining, and damned funny as well:

We had a rather large thing in our home and one day it got a hold of Bev and Jimmy's schnauzer. It was a buttocks-shaped seat-testing machine used by the airlines. We examined the house with ultraviolet light because granulated schnauzer fluoresces; we scrutinized the carpet for the white glow of schnauzer. Bev and Jimmy were from different cultures. Bev was from a pagan, matriarchal, moon-worshipping, earth-related stone culture, while Jimmy was from a patriarchal, sun-worshipping, heaven-related bronze culture. But one thing upon which they both agreed was using Olivia and me for the freak pulverization of the schnauzer (p. 20).

My Cousin, My Gastroenterologist may or may not be an important literary work; it is definitely a delightfully intense and hilarious experience and despite the lack of coherent story or narrative—Bev in the above lasts another page-and-a-half then vanishes, to be replaced by umpteen other brief encounters over the course of several dozen free-form "chapters"—and occasional all lower-case-letters, spaces instead of punctuation and generally non-standard layout will manage to catch even those whose tastes do not normally run to the esoteric and bizarre. Not merely a clever parody like Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, or Harrison's *Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers*—the only previous work in science fiction to come close to it is Robert Shekley's *Options*, a dark satirical work that is known for its incoherent narrative structure but is far more coherent, although less successful, than *Gastroenterologist*, in which the humor comes from random cynical observations but from the close juxtaposition of incompatible images, as well as rapid-fire free association that drags the reader along unaccommodated mental paths. *Options* can blow mental circuits; *Gastroenterologist* can fry them beyond repair. Behold:

i had fifteen fatal diseases induced by pesticides, exhaust fumes, cosmetics, charcoal-broiled and fatty foods and they were all cured instantly by a sugar-coated placebo called a milk dud, but then they recrudesced exponentially so that i had 225 mortal illnesses my doctor painted a grim picture of each disease: he did my leukemia in acrylic on canvas, he did my mercury poisoning in watercolor on composition board, my asbestosis in day-glo enamel on wood, and my emphysema in synthetic polymer on plexiglass (p. 108)

Hardly the stuffy, dogging, or self-indulgent prose that is often to be found in books that have been praised by the *Times* and the *Voice*. What Mr. Leyner is doing owes more to the traditions of stand-up comedy than to any literary influence. He has managed to capture on paper the oral rhythms and timing of his brother in thought and approach, Academy Award-winning writer/comedian Stephen Wright. Wright is the inventor of the deadpan presentation style behind a school of comedians that includes Rita Rudner and Roseanne Barr. Consider these excerpts from Wright's routine, transcribed into Leynerian typography and presented in no particular order because he never does, and compare it to the either of the above Leyner passages:

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i was walking through New York and i saw a guy jump off the Empire State Building down he fell, faster and faster eight feet above the ground he did a triple-twisting-backflip somersault, landed on his feet and walked away two kittens were watching one said to the other see? that's how you do that you can't have everything where would you put it? i have a very large sea-shell collection, i keep it scattered on beaches all over the world you've probably seen it i live in a house on the median strip of a highway it's not bad but you do have to leave the driveway doing 60 miles an hour it's a two story house the walls on the first floor have murals of the rooms on the second floor so i never have to go upstairs [Comic Relief '90]

This is a far better representation of the feel of Wright's routine than could be accomplished with the intrusion of standard quotes, periods and commas. Leyner's style accurately captures the tone and pacing necessary to make this kind of comedic idea-dropping work. The monotonal, joke-a-minute, sharply-pointed yet free-associative approach that Wright and Leyner share comes across much more successfully in this form than when it is done in conventional typography.

The thing that unifies Wright and Leyner, however, is the care and attention put into the structuring of—to use the jargon of their fields—each “joke” in Wright's case and each “sentence” in Leyner's. Only populist authors, it is said, worry about such things as opening with a narrative hook and other audience grabbing tricks. For both Wright and Leyner, their craft is enticing because almost every line is in itself a narrative hook (and could in fact serve quite well as the opening of a separate story), and has artistic value because all these opening lines, laid in a row, create powerful and effective, if non-coherent, passages and epiphanies. Furthermore Wright and Leyner, by declaring themselves free from constraints of Time, Space, and Logic, have let loose their imaginations in ways that more rigid writers cannot. Consider these lines, all taken from the first three pages of *My Cowin, My Gastroenterologist*:

I was driving to Las Vegas to tell my sister that I'd had my mother's respirator unplugged.

Greg Cox Excerpts from *The Transylvanian Library: A Consumer's Guide to Vampire Fiction*

WHARTON, EDITH
“Bewitched” (1926: 22 pp.)

A tale of backwoods vampirism, set in New England farm country, in which a father is informed that his dead daughter is now walking by night and preying on an old suitor. But can this be true?

Wharton maintains a mood of ominous uncertainty throughout this story, which is also distinguished by the rural setting and dialogue. The final result is understated, but effective.

See also: “The Last Grave of Lil Warren” by WELLMAN.

FORTUNE, DION
The Demon Lover (London: Noel Douglas, 1927: 286 pp.)

There are three important personalities in this novel: Veronica Wainwright, the innocent but good-hearted heroine; Justin Lucas, the ruthless psychic who learns to love Veronica; and Dion Fortune herself, narrator, commentator, and pedant on matters mystical.

Fortune (alias Violet M. Firth) was an occultist in real life and her book, set among the secret mystic societies of the 1920s, offers a smorgasbord of exposition regarding supernatural phenomena, including telepathy, astral projection, Unseen Presences, and vampires. “The Secret Sciences,” they are called, and, sure enough, we are eventually provided with a case study in “scientific” vampirism.

I asked the waitress about the *soup du jour* and she said it was primordial soup—which is ammonia and methane mixed with ocean water in the presence of lightning.

I was an infinitely hot and dense dot. Thus begins the autobiography of a fetal child raised by huge and lurid puppets.

Or this from Stephen Wright:

I know a man with two wooden legs and real feet.

What they sacrifice is context. Until Wright all comedians worried about things like blends and segues, worried about how to transit from commentary on plane travel, for instance, to marriage or some other fertile topic. Wright's breakthrough was to dispense with context and simply pump out calculated bits of paradox and sharp flashes of the ridiculous. Leyner is doing much the same thing. As anyone who has ever tried to find an enticing opening for even one story knows, it is an extremely difficult thing to pull off, and to accomplish it hundreds of times on page after page (or stage after stage) is a tremendous feat. That's why those who have described Leyner with phrases involving drugs miss the point; his wide-ranging free-association is firmly under the control of a strongly focused mind, not a distorted one. It is also what makes *Gastroenterologist* such a motivating, rewarding and hilarious read.

Having successfully translated the strengths of Wright's kind of stand-up comedy to print, Leyner has also brought along a weakness: the book works only when the jokes are funny. On the rare occasions when something that is supposed to hook you doesn't, or where you can see it all coming too far in advance, the book falters noticeably. In the work of both Wright and Leyner, very little supporting storyline surrounds the comedy routine so if a particular joke falls flat it has betrayed its only reason for being. But like a good comedian Leyner rushes on to the next sentence so quickly that your attention doesn't have time to waver and your sneer dies unborn. But enough analysis; if you have the sense of humor for the book you'll like it, and you'll quote from it at parties. Granulated schussauer, anyone? ▶

Overly ambitious, Justin Lucas is condemned by a benevolent occult organization (“The Society for the Study of Comparative Folklore”), but he escapes death, and subsequent Karmic Justice, by abandoning his body moments before execution, leaving behind an apparently lifeless corpse. For months thereafter, while his undecayed body lies trapped beneath the ground, the spirit of Justin Lucas survives by stealing life-force from others, usually children.

For no obvious reason, though *Dracula* is cited as an authority, Lucas cannot endure sunlight or cross running water. He can, however, enter the bodies of suitably ferocious animals, like a huge black mastiff.

What we have, in other words, is a ghost/vampire/werewolf, and an explanation that covers all three. Not bad, especially since lesser writers have merely blurred them together. See NICOLSON, or SAXON.

The Demon Lover has aged surprisingly well. The prose is occasionally pedantic, but the mystical concerns of the major characters, with their secret rites and hidden struggles, have not dated as have more conventional heroes and heroines of the past. Indeed, Fortune's portrait of a vampire personality is definitely ahead of its time.

Justin Lucas is neither a Creature of Hell, or a Reluctant Vampire. He is, at first, a creature of unbridled individualism, the ultimate extension of which is vampirism of some sort or another. Finally, he must choose between the advantages of evil (a strength born of selfishness) and “mere” humanity, with all its warmth and vulnerability.

See also CHARNAS and STRIEBER.

QUINN, SEABURY

"The Man Who Cast No Shadow" (*Weird Tales*, March 1927: 28 pp.)

"Restless Souls" (*Weird Tales*, October 1928: 38 pp.)

"The Silver Countess" (*Weird Tales*, October 1929: 32 pp.)

Jules de Grandin was *Weird Tales*' answer to Sherlock Holmes, except that the puzzles he unravelled, issue after issue, almost never had a "rational" explanation. This energetic and ever-observant Frenchman even had his own Watson, named Dr. Trowbridge, who somehow managed to stay confused and disbelieving despite ninety-three separate encounters with Dark Forces from Beyond! Certainly, Trowbridge never got used to the vampires. De Grandin kept finding them, though, and always in New Jersey. . . .

"The Man Who Cast No Shadow," their first encounter with the Undead, actually involves two very different vampires. One is an early American vampiress known only as Sarah, just recently escaped from her tomb (as in "The Tomb of Sarah" by LORING), who is finally done in by garlic and a wooden stake. Less traditional is Baron Lajos Czacon of Transylvania, a semi-human vampire (albeit with hairy palms and a missing reflection) who requires the blood of a virgin once every century in order to maintain his hellish immortality. The Baron resorts to the unique, if expensive, strategy of buying up all the garlic in town, only to be dispatched by Jules de Grandin's ready sword-cane.

Not a very exciting story, really, but we might note that the Baron is supposedly the offspring of a demon and a mortal woman.

In "Restless Souls," the two heroes uncover a tragic love story involving a Reluctant Vampiress and a terminally-ill youth. In a surprising moment, de Grandin actually chooses not to interfere (after all, where's the harm?), but his hand is ultimately forced by the girl-vampire's evil master, an Undead murderer/rapist named Joachim Palenčec—whose vampiric resurrection is partially attributed to his Slavic ancestry.

Palenčec is your standard vamp, obeying all the old rules, but "The Silver Countess" works in her own weird way. The horror here turns out to be a seven-hundred-year-old marble statue of a vampire, one that preys on its victims by proxy. Here's how it works: the statue enchants some innocent mortal, forcing him or her to attack and drink the blood of a third party (always male). The human pawn then delivers the blood to the true vampire by kissing the statue's stone lips.

An original and titillating concept, but unfortunately, where the Jules de Grandin stories are concerned, the ideas are a bit better than the execution. Too much time and trouble, perhaps, spent explaining the plots to poor Trowbridge.

For more on occult detectives, see HERON.

WORRELL, EVERIL

"The Canal" (*Weird Tales*, December 1927: 16 pp.)

It is an old superstition, perpetuated in *Dracula*, that vampires have great difficulty crossing over running water. (How difficult depends on whom you take as an authority.) Though the why of it is obscure, this vampiric inability is prevalent enough that one should really think twice before falling in love, as the hero of "The Canal" does, with a woman who spends every night sitting on a boat in the middle of a decaying canal, waiting for the current to stop flowing.

Which finally it does.

At this point, when the poor swain belatedly realizes his lover's true nature, his response is as much an uneasy compromise as her earlier strange confinement; he gives her both his blood and a stake, in the hope that "I will know that dark ecstasy, and I will insure that no other knows it after me." We hope so too, but the story leaves the outcome uncertain.

A TV version of "The Canal" may have appeared on *Night Gallery* as an episode titled "Girl on a Barge." Or else another vampiress found herself up a similar creek.

OWEN, FRANK

"The Tinkle of the Camel's Bell" (*Weird Tales*, December 1928: 10 pp.)

An Oriental fantasy set in Old China, where the wanderer, Li Kan, finds himself trapped in the house of the Sweet Lady Chin Chu, and ageless beauty whose very touch draws the life from flowers, gems, and unsuspecting men. (An all-purpose vampire if ever there was one!) Li Kan nearly succumbs to her charms, but, in the end, he escapes with his life.

A familiar story, yes, but redeemed somewhat by its unusual and exotic setting.



HOWARD, ROBERT E.

"The Hills of the Dead" (*Weird Tales*, August 1930: 30 pp.)

"The Moon of Skulls" (*Weird Tales* 1931: 78 pp.)

"Wings in the Night" (*Weird Tales*, July 1932: 47 pp.)

"The Horror from the Mound" (*Weird Tales*, May 1932: 20 pp.)

"The Garden of Fear" (*Marvel Tales*, July-August 1934: 15 pp.)

"Sword-and-sorcery" is the label commonly applied to that body of fiction concerned with heroic swordsmen (or swordswomen) pitted against inhuman menaces in exotic lands, as exemplified by Robert E. Howard's most famous creation, Conan the Barbarian. Over the years, the vampire has found steady employment in this flourishing sub-genre of fantasy, not in a starring role but simply as one of the many monsters available to test the hero's valor. Even Conan met a vampire once, an immortal "Queen of Stygia" in the novel *The Hound of the Dragon* (also published as *Conan the Conqueror*).

But Howard's most notable vampire-hunter was not the rambunctious Barbarian, but rather a dour Puritan warrior named Solomon Kane. Kane was a fanatical enemy of evil whose restless spirit carried him through about a dozen adventures in nearly every corner of the sixteenth Century world. In particular, Kane spent a lot of time in Darkest Africa, where he encountered no less than three different races of vampires.

In "The Moon of Skulls," Kane rescues an English maiden from the degenerate, blood-drinking descendants of an ancient Atlantean cult. In "Wings in the Night," the vampires are a race of fiendish bat-people (identified as the harpies Jason drove out of Greece). And, in "The Hills of the Dead," Solomon Kane teams up with an African shaman to take on an entire city of seemingly-indestructible Undead. The latter story is interesting in that it reveals a new and logical weapon against vampires: the humble buzzard.

In Kane's own words: "Defy man and God, but you may not deceive the vultures, sons of Satan! They know whether a man be alive or dead!"

The whole series is like that, really. Lurid, melodramatic, and plenty of fun.

A note on the bibliography: the Solomon Kane stories have been reprinted under a variety of titles and groupings. Red Shadows, a 1968 hardcover edition, is the only complete collection I know of, but assorted paperback versions may be easier to find. Look for the giant "By the Creator of CONAN!" on the cover.



"The Horror from the Mound" is a less flamboyant, more traditional vampire story about a rugged cowboy who opens up what appears to be an old Indian burial mound in Texas, only to release an Undead Spaniard, Don Santiago de Valdez, entombed by the conquistadores in 1545. In true Howard fashion, though, the hero proves tough enough to defeat Don Santiago once and for all. With fire.

See also DANIELS (for a possible relative of Santiago).



Last and probably least, there's "The Garden of Fear," a by-the-numbers sword-and-sorcery adventure in which Hunwulf the Wanderer, "of the golden-haired Aesir," leaves his northern haunts and encounters two prehistoric vampire variants: a bat-winged black man (similar to those in "Wings in the Night") and a deadly garden of blood-sucking scarlet flowers (see ROBINSON for more on such Botanical Vampires). A horde of stampeding mammoths destroys the latter, while Hunwulf's mighty axe is sufficient for the former.

It's a lively, action-packed tale, and Howard's description of the vampiric blossoms is lushly gruesome, but both hero and demon are too mindlessly bestial to make much of an impression. Not too surprisingly, the story was later adapted as an episode of the *Conan the Barbarian* comic book series.



SMITH, CLARK ASHTON

"The End of the Story" (*Weird Tales*, May 1930: 21 pp.)

"A Rendezvous in Averroigne" (*Weird Tales*, April/May 1931: 13 pp.)

"The Death of Iialotha" (*Weird Tales*, September 1937: 13 pp.)

Clark Ashton Smith specialized in picturesque, darkly beautiful fantasies of ancient, imaginary times. His stories of vampires and lamia

(which terms he tended to use interchangeably) make Lovecraft and Howard seem like models of contemporary realism. Fairy tales both sinister and lovely . . .

Beginning with "The End," we find ourselves in the forests of Averroigne, where a young student finds a secret path back into the pagan, pre-Christian past—and the arms of a seductive lamia. Like his predecessor in "Clarimonde," this slave of passion is eventually rescued by a concerned and aged abbot, but the ending hints that he will return to the beautiful, inhuman Nyssa. (See also: GAUTIER, WORRELL.)

Another lamia appears in "The Death of Iialotha," which is set entirely in the sort of spectacularly decadent past glimpsed in the earlier story. In old Tanunin, the handsome Lord Thulos is drawn by an irresistible, necrophilic compulsion to visit the tomb of his late, jilted lover, Iialotha. Deep within the crypt, he finds both ecstasy and death in the coils of a serpentine monster. (See also: WALTERS.) This is Clark Ashton Smith at his best, perhaps. Morbid, sensual, and otherworldly.

Even in "Rendezvous," his most traditional vampire story, these qualities appear. When an unlucky troubador and his lady, trying in medieval France, wander into the enchanted castle of the evil Sieur du Malinbois and his equally Undead wife, their captors prove to be old-fashioned Creatures of Hell, complete with thin, white faces and scarlet lips. The inevitable staking, however, yields surprising results:

With a sense of weird vertigo and confusion Gerard and Raoul saw that the whole chateau had vanished like the towers and battlements of a bygone storm; that the dead lake and its rotting shores no longer offered their malefic illusions to the eye. They were standing in a forest glade, in the full unshadowed light of the afternoon sun; and all that remained of the dismal castle was the lichen-mantled tomb that stood open beside them.

Vampire stories are seldom so unreal and magical, although a few other authors have penned similar tales. See LEE and PIERCE.



JACOBI, CARL

"Revelations in Black" (*Weird Tales*, April 1933: 20 pp.)

An Austrian noblewoman, displaced by World War I, enchants several victims in London, including (briefly) the narrator. Her brother, also Undead, spends most of the story as a were-hound of some sort, but both he and the seductive Perle von Mauren have been bound to one locale, an abandoned garden, by the mysterious "revelations" written about them in the diaries of a previous victim. An unusual notion, which the author presents as an "old metaphysical law: evil shrinking in the face of truth."

There's a catch, of course. Writing about vampires may limit their mobility (at least according to this story), but whoever reads those writings falls under the vampire's power. Something to think about the next time you browse through this Library . . .

Still, despite the strange, er, book-binding going on, this remains a mostly predictable variation on the Standard Early Vampire Story. See: LORING.



MOORE, C.L.

"Shambléau" (*Weird Tales*, November 1933: 27 pp.)

"You think me vampire, eh? No, I am Shambléau!"

The speaker is a strange alien woman, of unknown origin, who seduces Northwest Smith, rugged space explorer, in this science fiction horror story set on the planet Mars. At first, Shambléau seems closer to a Gorgon than a lamia, for beneath her concealing turban she hides a mass of snake-like tendrils, but these "wet, warm" extremities drain the life from her lovers, even as the envelop and caress them in an addictive, super-sensual embrace. Even Northwest Smith, feared though he is

Orphia's Delayed Second Issue A Note of Interest by Richard Terra:

In the July 1990 issue the *NTRSF* ran my review of the debut issue of *Orphia: Slavic Science Fiction and Fantasy Magazine*, which was dated March 1990. The review included the addresses in Bulgaria and Switzerland to which one could send mailing information and payment for a subscription.

So far, that first issue has been the *only* issue, despite the publisher's intentions to put the magazine out on a monthly schedule. Those who gambled and took out a subscription, myself included, could only wait, noting the increasingly difficult economic situation and political disarray in Bulgaria as its people strive to restructure their entire socio-economic system. I had begun to think of my \$40 as a sort of private East European aid fund.


I've recently had some encouraging news, however, in a letter from Atanas Slavov, *Orphia's* Editor-in-Chief:

Having made the first issue of *Orphia* we were overoptimistic in our estimation of market and distribution. It was a natural error for a group of enthusiasts from an East-European country where not so long ago the individual had only to work and left all business activities to the state. The world market instead presented many problems which needed time to be resolved and caused a delay of almost six months in our work.

Now all the obstacles are behind us (we hope so) and we ask you kindly to accept our apologies for the irregularity in our editing activity . . .

Hoping for your understanding of the difficulties in starting a new SF magazine and apologizing again, I remain

Sincerely Yours,
(signed) Atanas Slavov

Mr. Slavov wrote that he hopes to see four issues of *Orphia* appear in 1990 and then continue publication on a regular monthly schedule beginning in 1991. The publishers seem to be making an honest, good-faith effort to meet their commitments to their subscribers, and ask our patience. I myself am eagerly awaiting Issue #2, and again wish them luck. 

throughout the planets, is saved from death only by the intervention of his Venetian sidekick, and is left both shaken and scarred.

"Shamblau," the story, starts out as the comic sort of pulp adventure, but gets richer and stranger as the tale grows more and more sickly erotic. Shamblau herself remains mystery, though her breed are "a species of vampires—or maybe the vampire is a species of them." In

either case, she was the first of many extraterrestrial vamps.

See also: CARAKER, FARMER, GOULART, HYDER, KNIGHT (DAMON), LEE, LICHTENBERG, STRAUM, VAN VOGT, and WILSON.



Luke McGuff Small Press Reviews

As I delve further into the range of magazines, I find more and more variety, with different intentions and ambitions from each publisher. Some try to be radical, some traditional (and what is traditional or radical anymore, anyway!), all try to be the best they can or care to be.

I made a pact with the devil, and for every time I say "semiotics," I get to say "sci-fi." Okay! Ride 'em cowboy!

BOING-BOING #3 & #4

\$3.00 each

Mark Frauenfelder, P.O. Box 12311, Boulder, CO 80303

BOING-BOING could be called a "funzine." I.e., a zine (rhymes with "magazine") whose organizing principle is having a good time. Funzines I've seen have included *Crazy Pete and Ben's Newsletter*, and *The Space-Time Continuum and Your Pocket Wrench*. I also think that b-b is the zine I'd do if I weren't a boring old fart.

Frauenfelder calls b-b a "neurozine," which means he's interested in consciousness, but not in a meditative new age way. He talks about "brain toys." From what I hear, brain toys generate patterns of light and sound that stimulate the brain into a different state of being. Frauenfelder reviews brain toys with a "let's lie around in the park on a sunny day" spirit that I find refreshingly nonsensical.

Of interest to sf readers would be the brief interview with Rudy Ruckert in #3, the Marc Laidlaw cartoon, the book and software reviews, and the almost-parallel-universe "Exciting News" feature. There's also fiction of varying qualities. But I like reading amateur fiction for the same reason I like listening to an unskilled bar band bash through some tunes. Sometimes it's more exciting to watch people having fun than to watch people being perfect.

#4 has "Seventeen Point Drug Policy," and I wondered how something that accurate got printed in this day and age. Well, the reason it's in a zine like BOING-BOING is because only people like you and me will read it. It's an immediately discreditable source. #5 is slated to have an interview with Peter Lamborn Wilson (editor of *Semiotext(e)*) and a Paul Di Filippo story.

b-b is also well produced, graphically interesting. Frauenfelder's cartoons have a neo-atomic design feel that complements the intent of the magazine.

Back Brain Recluse #15

\$5.00

North American Contact:
New SF Alliance, Anne Marsden

31468 Calle la Purisima, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

BBR is perhaps the reigning magazine on the British small press scene. This is the first issue I can recall seeing, so I can't say how it has progressed. But a magazine produced with the attitude that Chris Reed shows throughout can't have been stagnating.

It begins with an editorial called "A Free Market for SF?" about the increasing small press activity in Great Britain. Reed is smarter than to champion the small press work as being better than what happens in the above-ground press; it's merely different. But neither can the above-ground press say that it's better. Of the six stories in this issue, I liked three enough to mention here: "Howard Bogler's Fabulous Space Cafe," by David B. Riley, a good joke, as long as it needed to be; Garry Kilworth's "Truman Capote's Tribble: The Facts," an *Orbit*-esque lark about a hat and its personality; and finally "Crime Watcher," by David Hart, the longest and my favorite story. In reading a lot of sf, I've often

thought, "where are the people *not* in the net, the ones I work with and see on the bus?" And in reading small press, I've often thought, where are the *god-dang* adventure stories! "Crime Watcher" fits the bill for both. The selection of illustrations for each story fit the feel and style of the writing.

There's also a long review section in the back, with many US and UK slipstream and sf underground publications reviewed.

#16 promises to have (according to the blurb inside) stories by Paul Di Filippo, Don Webb, and Wayne Allen Salloe (a UK small press star). Ordering from the North American address above (cheques payable in US dollars to Anne Marsden) will also get you a catalog of British and US sf magazines distributed by the New SF Alliance. (North American magazines include, for instance, *Isis Rising*, *SF Eye*, and *Edge Detector*, from Canada.)

Also of note:

Strange Plasma #3 has just arrived, with fiction by Carol Emshwiller, Terry Dowling (Australia) and a few others. This issue suffers from a too-tight design, and no editorial presence. But still worth getting, particularly if you like Carol Emshwiller. (\$3 to Edgewood Press, P.O. Box 264, Cambridge, MA 02238).

Mark Ziesing—mentioned last time in conjunction with *Journal Wired*—also publishes a catalogue of books and magazines that might be hard to find elsewhere (including his own). With articles by Andy Watson, Lucius Shepard, and others, it's more than "just" a catalogue. (\$2 to: P.O. Box 76, Shingletown, CA 96088).

Factsheet Fivest, through no fault of its own, the be-all and end-all of reviewzines. It lists, alphabetically, the zines, books, chapbooks, videos, buttons, software, t-shirts, records, tapes, CDs, stuff and things et cetera and more, that Mike Gunderloy, the publisher, receives between bimonthly issues. A close reading will reveal numerous types of zines, from slipstream and sf (isn't that a city university at Leavenworth and Market?) to beat-crazy lizzies. Highly recommended. (\$21/6 issues, to: Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Ave., Rensselaer, NY 12144-4502). *F55* is my first source; if you think I'm onto something but want to skip the middle-man, then get yourself a subscription.

Luke McGuff lives in Seattle, Washington.

The New York Review of Science Fiction Readings at Dixon Place

There are still two scheduled readings left in this series. If you have missed previous ads, the remaining events are:

November 14

Joan D. Vinge

Ellen Kushner

December 19

Michael Swanwick

James Morrow

Admission: \$4.98. Seating is limited.
Time: 8:00 p.m. (doors open at 7:30)

Dixon Place: 37 E. 1st St. (between 1st and 2nd Avenues) New York, NY 10003

Anatomy of the SF Context

Continued from page 24

published? Marketed? Distributed? Read? How does the manner in which sf is "done" influence the form and content of sf books and movies? And then there's the matter of point-of-view: how does sf look to the people who do it?

Science Fiction as Affiliation

Finally, we may also regard sf as an affiliation. As you may have noticed, perhaps with increasing irritation, I have not yet admitted fandom into my sf schematic. This is not out of prejudice, or a feeling that it has little impact on the literature. On the contrary. Rather, in notions of the science fiction field structured by considering sf as product or as activity, many elements of the sf context that we, inside the field, feel are of vital importance to an understanding of sf can seem of tertiary importance or even irrelevant.

Affiliation with the sf field can be either formal—for example membership in SFWA—or informal—attending a party where there are science fiction fans. The distinction between defining sf by activity and by affiliation can be quite subtle. Someone who puts out a fanzine is engaged in an activity, but not one that (necessarily) produces sf. We define their relationship to sf on the basis of their membership in the informally or organized community of people who produce fanzines and

the affiliation of that group with sf. There seem to me to be four main types of affiliations, both formal and informal, the list of which will surprise no one: professional, academic, and two different kinds of fanish affiliation. What the distinction between the two of them boils down to is those types of affiliations and those people whose involvement with fandom has as its necessary prerequisite a desire to read, write or in some way be involved with science fiction (the product), and whose involvement doesn't—they like to make costumes or play fantasy role-playing games or have parties in hotels. Here, attempts to anatomize could increase the size of this essay exponentially, and I promised to be brief, so I'll leave off of that for now.

What I have attempted to suggest here, in rudimentary fashion, is a formulation by which we can count the fingers and toes of the sf context when we set out to put some science fictional artifact in its proper context, to make sure it's all there. While considering sf as product and as activity is tremendously valuable to gaining and understanding of what makes sf tick, we know that the sf affiliation has a very strong impact on the form and context of the literature and, to a considerably lesser extent, the movies. So let's not forget to remember what we already know about sf.

—Kathryn Cramer & the editors.

¹One such book is *Age of Wonder* by David G. Hartwell, which Dragon Press will be happy to supply if you send \$3.95 to Box 78, Pleasantville, NY 10570.

Paul Williams

from *Rock and Roll: The 100 Best Singles*

Bo Diddley
"Mona"

Authority. According to the cliché, rock and roll is an expression of youthful revolt against adult authority, but that's a half-truth at best. The great rock and roll records go far beyond questioning or expressing dissatisfaction with the status quo; rather, they succeed in establishing a new authority all their own. Unselfconscious, these artists run out into unknown territory no one else even suspected existed, suss out the vibration of the place, and shout out, "Here I am!"

Bo Diddley arrived on the rock/r&b scene with a stunning double-sided proclamation of his own existence: "Bo Diddley" (the ultimate eponymous song title) backed with "I'm A Man." He borrowed from Muddy Waters, borrowed from Latin music, borrowed from Negro jivin' street humor (anticipating rap music by several decades)—like any good rocker he took a little from anything and everything that caught his attention or stuck in his mind, and mixed it up into something utterly and unforgettably his own. Bo Diddley's sound (not just a beat but a *swung*, indeed a whole complex of sounds) is the forceful, undeniable expression of a new reality loose in the world; and never more authoritative, more absolute, more self-contained or self-explanatory or self-fulfilling (apocalyptic; the moment is arrived; this is it) than on Bo's two-minute-and-eighteen-second epiphany (released in '57 as the B-side of the r&b hit "Hey! Bo Diddley") called "Mona."

To listen to "Mona" is to feel the universe shudder.

Like the African mask-faces of the women in Picasso's revolutionary painting "Les Femmes d'Alger," the African moans that issue from Bo Diddley's mouth in "Mona" pierce the consciousness of the listener, the observer, demanding that he or she immediately recognize and acknowledge the incompleteness of Western consensual perception. There are deep emotional truths and archetypes whose existence we deny or belittle as we go through our daily motions offhounding the world together. The moans in "Mona," and the

shuddering rhythmic instrumental echoes of those moans, confront us inescapably with this potent, repressed information about who humans are and what happens in our lives. These truths cannot be spoken in existing language, and so the artist—in this case the performing artist—breaks open language by reaching for its antecedents, in the process inventing (rediscovering; seeming to invent) new ways of communicating, new ways to transfer visceral, felt truth from one human to another. The immediate impact of the listener of course is not the new techniques (those have impact over the next many decades, as other musicians try to recreate what they heard and felt from this recording) but the "new" (previously unacknowledged) truths. We hear them. We know them. We see through the transparent cement, the evenescient steel girders, of our twentieth century reality, into the underlying rhythmic reality of the pulsing, organic universe we really live in. We moan in response.

"Hey! Hey, hey, Mona . . ." It's a song about desire, a song about turning to jelly. But, uh, dignified jelly, proud jelly, the kind that maintains its integrity no matter what. The suburban imagery of the lyrics ("Tell you Mona what I wanna do/Build a house next door to you/ . . . We can throw kisses through the blinds") is bizarre and comic up against the naked sensuality and irresistible power of the music, the rhythm, the voice. This is a man revealing the intensity of his feelings, pledging his love by frankly and beguilingly admitting his need. "Without your love I'd surely die." I mean, if you care about me at all, what more do you need to know?

There's a voodoo power in this recording, heavy primal magic. Not the image of magic, mind you; that wouldn't be enough to drive three generations and more of young musicians crazy with the desire to make music like this. No, actual magic. You can reach out and touch it. Or rather, you can put it on the phonograph, and wait confidently. It will reach out and touch you. ▶

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Anatomy of the SF Context

Let's talk about how we talk about science fiction. That literature is molded by the manner and era in which it is produced, and that in order to have an informed opinion of a particular literary work or body of literature, one must examine it "in context" are the notions from which I will begin my discussion. When we are irritated by the odd thoughts about sf of critics and reviewers outside the field, often the source of our irritation has something to do with the critic's ignorance of or indifference to some aspect of the sf context.

What, then, is our context? There are no graduate programs in it—and there's little enough consensus on what the sf canon is, let alone agreement as to its proper embedding. While many books and articles have been written about sf, very few attempts have been made to codify the sf context as a whole.¹ In this brief editorial, rather than trying to define the context, I will instead suggest approaches.

It seems to me that there are three separable ways of regarding science fiction that structure the sf context in distinct ways: sf as product; sf as activity; and sf as affiliation. These points of view on sf are not mutually exclusive; imagine instead that we look from above, from the side, and from below.

Science Fiction as Product

We live in a consumer society, and science fiction considered as cultural artifact is a consumer item. It is produced—in book form, movie form, etc.—distributed to someone somewhere, paid for or checked out or borrowed or stolen, and then consumed—read, watched, whatever. Thus, in this particular context, when I call sf "product" I am remarking only upon its self-evident status as a consumer item, and am ignoring, for the moment, the manner in which this status distorts it.

Attempting to generate the science fiction field, i.e. the sf context, from the notion of sf as product divides sf's context into three parts: literary criticism, in which the object is evaluated for its aesthetic content; marketing, in which sf is evaluated for its merits as a consumer item proper—an instrument for making money; and science fiction as religion, in which sf is evaluated for its ideational content and its myth structures in a manner that resembles theological discussion, in which, for example, making a scientific error is treated as a kind of heresy. In all three cases, science fiction begins as a physical object.

Science Fiction as Activity

We may also regard science fiction as an activity, something people do by which science fiction, the product, comes into being. Who "does" science fiction? Authors, publishers, editors, filmmakers, booksellers, readers, viewers. In a sense, it is stretching it to include the last few groups in this list, because they do not in the strict sense "produce" sf; they consume it. But sf could not be a product, in the sense in which I'm using the word here, unless it is consumed, so the readers and viewers contribute to sf's status as product and therefore make their way onto my list. When we regard it this way, we ask what people do when they "do" sf: How is sf written? By whom? How does one become an sf writer? How is sf

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